श्रुतिस्मृतिपुराणानां आलयं करुणालयम् ।
नमामि भगवत्पादशंकरं लोकशंकरम् ॥

I bow to Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada who is the benefactor of the whole world, the embodiment of Grace and the repository of the Vedas *(the import of which he propounded in his advaita philosophy),* smrti *(the prescriptions of which he enjoined on his own followers, the smartas) and Puranas (from which mainly sprang the six sub-faiths of theistic Hinduism, called the* Shan-matas).

Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada taught us the truth that all the deities we hereditarily worship are but the manifestations of the One Supreme Self—*Paramatman.* He established the worship of the forms of Siva, Vishnu, Sakti, Surya, Ganapati and Kumara, all sanctified in the Vedas, and each having a specific Gayatri Mantra. If worshipped with devotion, all of them will enable us to attain the same Supreme Soul. In that way he established the practical interpretation of the *Gita* teaching,

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥

Whatever form a devotee seeks to worship with faith,
I stabilize the faith of that devotee in that very form.

He travelled in all the 56 kingdoms of this country, where the Vedas were prevalent, and proclaimed the Advaitic principle of Oneness of God. He who saw the Oneness of God and man, naturally saw the Oneness of all the Gods.

It is due to Sri Bhagavatpada and his prayer compositions in praise of the different manifestations of God that a new life has come to be breathed into temple worship and the festivals associated with temples. Therefore, it behoves us to celebrate as a great festival the birthday (Jayanti) of Bhagavatpada. Had it not been for this one Jayanti, the observance of the Jayantis of the avatars like Rama, Krishna and other festivals propitiating Ganapati, Siva, Sakti and Kumara would have ceased owing to the spread of atheism.

The survival of Hinduism is mainly due to the spread of the Advaitic temper, which saw no distinction between Saivam, Vaishnavam and other denominations and which therefore put an end to internal fights and paved the way for concerted action against alien onslaughts. Sri Adi Sankara underlined the essential unity of all *sampradayas* (traditions) and sects and saved Hinduism from disruption. All denominations have the common Vedic basis. By bringing to our minds the great achievement of the Acharya, we can acquire that peaceful frame of mind and develop that catholic temper and universal accommodation characteristic of Sri Adi Sankara and of the Advaita Vedanta he expounded, which will enable us to live in peace and amity, so essential for securing universal welfare.

—H.H. Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi

(Picture: Sri Sankara as enshrined in Sri Kamakshi Temple, Kanchipuram)

Artist: 'Silpi'

SANKARA

AND

SHANMATA

Souvenir published in connection with the Conference on 'SANKARA AND SHANMATA' held in Madras from June 1 - June 9, 1969

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DEDICATED

IN DEEPEST REVERENCE

TO

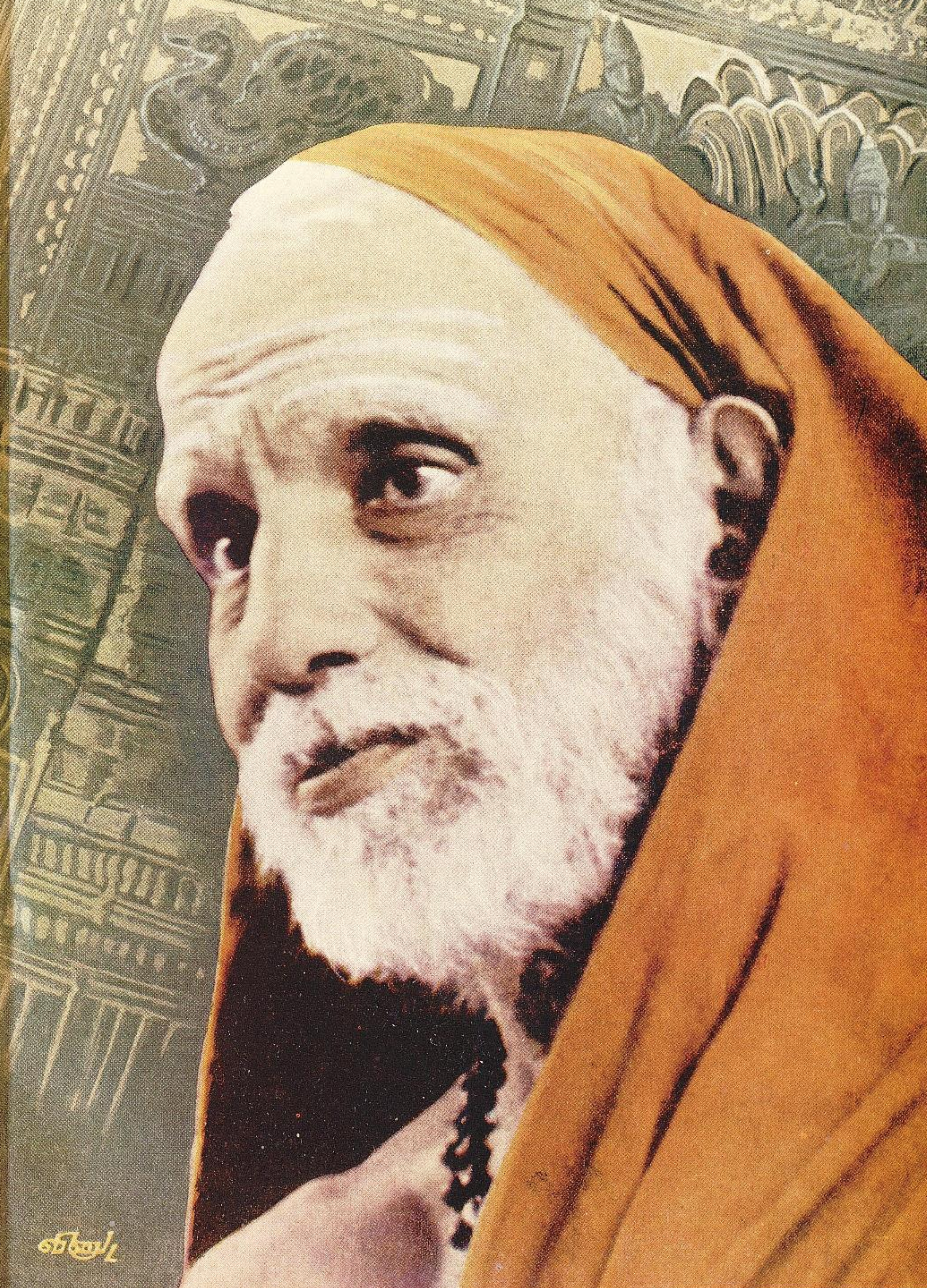
HIS HOLINESS JAGADGURU

SRI CHANDRASEKHARENDRA SARASVATI

SRI SANKARACHARYA SVAMI

OF

SRI KANCHI KAMAKOTI PEETHAM



PREFACE

This Souvenir, as well as the Conference on Sankara and Shanmata of which it is a part, are meant to throw light on the less known aspect of the well-known philosopher, Sri Sankaracharya, reverentially referred to as the Bhagavatpada. Throughout the international world of philosophy Sri Sankara is recognised as the Prince Philosopher of Non-dualism (Advaita) who laid out the Path of Knowledge (Jnana Marga) as the means to the Realisation of the individual's oneness with the Supreme. This is as it should be. The Advaitic Realization and the path of inquiry and knowledge transcend denominational religions and are universaily acceptable. This *jnana* aspect is not limited within the bounds of any particular church and that is why thinkers and spiritual aspirants all the world over are particularly drawn to this system—if a 'system' it is—in preference to any other philosophic systems of India. It is what occidental savants call a pure philosophy having nothing to do with religion.

But there is another important—perhaps equally important—aspect of Sri Sankaracharya. It is his great contribution to Hindu religion through his yeoman service in purifying the path of devotion (*bhakti marga*). However much thinkers may decry individualized and institutionalized churches, it has to be conceded that the popular mind can be attuned to the call of the Divine only within the framework of religion with its church and rites. The popular mind is more easily touched by an appeal to the emotions than to the intellect. Sri Sankara was deeply alive to this and that explains his mission of resuscitating the Hindu religion—as a religion, with all the ingredients and concomitants of a regular church. Sankara's greatness lies in the fact that he did not make this institution of religion a rigid ' cult ' affair, but made it as flexible as possible within the framework of Vedic prescriptions.

If Sankara was able to stem the tide of anti-Vedic or partially-Vedic systems and re-establish the pristine Vedic way of life in India, it was not only because of his great services as a philosopher, winning over the intelligentsia to his view, but also because of the equally important service as a man of religion appealing to the people at large, modifying and codifying the various ways of worship.

It is here that Sankara, the *Advaita Sthapaka*, Expounder of Non-Dualism through the Path of Knowledge, becomes the *Shanmata Pratishtapaka*, one who re-established the six sub-faiths of Hinduism. These six Hindu ways of worship were those dedicated to the six principal Divinities of the Hindu Pantheon, each considering its Divinity as the Supreme One, namely, Ganapatyam (faith of Ganapati), Kaumaram (faith of Kumara), Vaishnavam (faith of Vishnu), Sauram (faith of Surya), Saktam (faith of Sakti) and Saivam (faith of Siva).

SANKARA AND SHANMATA

Religion was in utter disarray in Sankara's times. Buddhism and Jainism, which denied the authority of the Vedas went contrary to traditional theism. Karma Mimamsakas who swore by the Vedas, laid all the emphasis on rituals as the be all and end all, banishing God altogether. But still the majority was engaged only in the worship of personal Gods of the Hindu pantheon, but unfortunately the modes of worship had gathered unwholesome accretions during the course of time. Swami Vivekananda is of the view that 'the most horrible and the most bestial customs' that permeated into the Hindu religion was due to 'the Tartars and Baluchis and all hideous races of mankind' who came to India and became Buddhists. Among the 'most hideous ....most horrible.........most obscene............most bestial' elements that found their way into Hinduism, particular mention must be made of the human-sacrifices of Kapalikas (worshipping Siva), the promiscuous cohabitation of the two sexes in Vamachara (worshipping Sakti), and the branding of the body by the different sects, especially the worshippers of Vishnu.

These may be said to be the external excrescences while internally at the very core of these faiths, the idea of claiming independence from the Vedas was gaining momentum. The minute details of worship are prescribed in the *agamas* and *tantras*. The leaders of the faiths claimed that these *agamas* and *tantras* were ultimate authorities in their own right and did not draw upon the Vedas. Of all religious scriptures, the Vedas represent the collective wisdom and realization of the highest in spiritual evolution and form the pith and marrow of Indian life. But the *tantrics* who became chiefs of religion tried to deny India of this very sap of existence—because they wanted all the sentimental, superstitious and irrational accretions to stay on. The rise of anti-Vedic religions like Jainism and Buddhism gave a further impetus to them to discard Vedic authority. But here the danger was greater. While Buddhism and Jainism which denied the Vedas clearly proclaimed themselves as faiths different from Hinduism, the *tantrics* maintained that they essentially belonged to the Hindu fold, in fact, they alone. This created utter chaos in people's mind.

Sankara set upon himself the onerous task of cleansing these sub faiths of all their excrescences and clipping their feathers within the four corners of the Vedas. *Sankara Vijayas* give an account of the uphill task and how the Great Acharya accomplished it as he only could have. Sankara travelled throughout the length and breadth of Bharat and entered into spirited debate with the leaders of the exclusive adherents of these faiths. He did not take much objection to their exclusive devotion to only one of the divinities, though personally as an Advaitin, he saw all the divinities as equally the manifestations of the one and only Absolute. Sankara, prescribed (or emphasised the earlier prescription of the Smrti) that his own disciples, the smartas, should worship all the six divinities by the *Panchayatana Puja* (pertaining to Siva, Sakti, Vishnu, Ganapati and Surya) and Vedic rites (over which Su-brahmanya or Kumara may be said to preside). But in his large-heartedness he could also sympathetically accept the worship of a single deity to the exclusion of others, as helping the devotee's mental concentration, so long as he did not decry the other divinities and their worship. Unfortunately, in his times, there were mutual bickerings and skirmishes among the various sects, each hurling abuses at the others and their gods. Sankara wanted to cleanse the modes of worship of their unholy excrescences, and the devotee's mind of antipathy towards the other faiths. Ultimately he impressed upon the leaders of the faiths the correctness of his own view, by the power of his dialectic skill, debating acumen and above all by his loving heart intensely dedicated to bringing about harmony among the heterogeneous Hindus.

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The *Anandagiriya Sankara Vijayam* narrates in detail how Sankara won over adherents of these faiths to the *Vedic* (or Advaitic) way, the places he visited in this connection, the persons with whom he debated, etc. It was in Kurangavaram that he held disputations with the Ganapatyas—exclusive followers of Ganapati—He accepted with them Ganapati as the Supreme Brahman, but at the same time enlightened them that the Supreme Brahman need not necessarily manifest itself as Ganapati alone. He also drove home to them the truth that they being on a different par from that of Sannyasins, who had renounced worldly life, it was incumbent on them to perform Vedic rites, in addition to Tantric worship.

That Sankara's views came to be accepted by the Ganapatyas is proved by the fact that he is considered to be one of the Yuga Acharyas of the faith of Ganapati.

Similarly, a band of Vaishnavas met Sankara in Anantasayanam. Besides countering their arguments about the Supremacy of the Personal God Narayana alone, Sankara also impressed upon them that bodily torture, like branding the body, took them no-where near spiritual edification. When they said that they brand the symbols of Vishnu in their body to be a perpetual reminder of the Great God, Sankara asked with a smile on his lips : " You say that He is Virat i.e., He is of the form of the entire cosmos. We are part of that cosmos or ourselves symbols of it. Why symbols on our body ? Or if it comes to that, can the symbols of the cosmos be exhausted?" Sankara did not altogether condemn symbols like *tulasi, rudraksha, vibhuti.* He knew their value, efficacy and place in the path of enlightenment. But he also knew the limit where to stop.

Sankara is reported to have installed in Srirangam and Tirupati the *Janakarshana* and *Dhankarshana yantras* which have the power to attract devotees and offerings. These two are the most important shrines of the Vaishnavas. Only if Sankara had had an acknowledged authority over the Vaishnavas, he could have performed the installation.

When the Saivites came to dispute with him in Ramesvaram, Sankara convinced them that while Sivam (Peace) is the Supreme Brahman whose realization is open for all, Siva (the Personal God of the Saivas) was only one of Its many manifestations. That Sankara installed the Mokshalinga and the *annakarshana yantra* (conferring plenty of food) at Chidambaram, which is the Temple of Temples for Saivas, may be taken as the culmination of his being recognized as the authentic reformer of the Saiva faith.

The episodes touching Sankara's purifying the *ugra-kala* (ferocious aspect) of Sakti enshrined at Tiruvanaikka, Kanchipuram, Mookambi etc., are only 'physical' concretization of his great life-work of purifying the Sakti faith. Many an important shrine of Sakti—Sri Kamakoshta of Sri Kamakshi Kamakoti in Kanchipuram, standing foremost—have *chakras* installed by Sankara and to this day, the Smarta form of worship as prescribed by Sankara, obtains in those places.

'Those who came to scoff remained to pray' said Goldsmith. Those who came as disputants became disciples of Sankara. The leaders of the various sub-faiths became his disciples. When Sankara took his abode in Kanchipuram in his last days, he sent out these disciples to propagate the worship of the six divinities within the Vedic (and catholic) framework. They did accordingly and reported back the success of their mission to Sankara. The 67th and succeeding *prakaranas* of *Anandagireeya* give an account of this. Paramata Kalanala (Saivam), Lakshmana and Hastamalaka (Vaishnavam), Divakara (Sauram), Tripura Kumara (Saktam) and Girijakumara (Ganapatyam) were the disciples who spread the faiths in the different parts of India.

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Here, as also in the 3rd Sarga of the *Guruvamsa Kavya* of Kasi Lakshmana Sastri, we do not find mention about Kaumaram (the faith of Kumara) but the Kapalika Faith instead, which is said to have been spread by one of Sankara's disciples Vatukanatha. This part of the narrative should certainly be due to a later day confusion in the classification of the Shan-matas. While we have Saivam as one of the six faiths, Kapalika which is also dedicated to Siva, and in His grisly aspect at that, need not again be treated as another of the Shan-matas. In fact, the episode of the Kapalika's attempt on the life of Sankara at Srisailam point only to Sankara's forthright condemnation of their ghastly practices. It was these practices that contributed to the very distinctness of this faith from Saivam and so Sankara could not make the Kapalikas shed them off as he did in the other cases. Or if he did, then devoid of these practices, the Kapalika too became nothing more and nothing less than a Saiva. The fact that while the Smarta (or Vedic) mode of worship is followed in the Sakti (Bhramaramba) shrine of Srisailam, the Lord there continues to be worshipped according to a less Vedic-oriented *tantric* way may, perhaps, be taken to point out that Sankara could not completely win over the Kapalikas.

On the contrary, we have much in evidence to include Kaumaram as one among the Shan-matas. Even from the days of *Yajnavalkya Smrti* and *Apasthambha Grhya Sutra* worship of Kumara had been enjoined on the Hindus (vide Late Polagam Rama Sastrigal's article in this Souvenir). And we have the soul-moving *Subrahmanya Bhujangam* hymn of Sankara on Kumara, which reflects his intense *bhakti* to this manifestation. So it will be incorrect to have Kapalika instead of Kaumaram in the six-fold classification.

The *Anandagireeya* tells us that Sankara took his abode for quite some time in a place called " Subrahmanyam ". The name itself may be taken to signify that it was a stronghold of Kaumara followers and we can surmise that Sankara stayed there only to reform that faith.

The unassailable, visual evidence we have in solid work in the early seventh century lower rock-cut cave in Tiruchi, showing all the Presiding Divinities of the six-faiths, in which we have Kumara and not the Kapali aspect of Siva sets at rest once for all arguments to the contrary.

It is also to be noted that Kumara and the other five divinities have Gayatris of their own, while the Kapalikas cannot claim to have one for their deity. Also, we do not have any hymn by Sankara on Siva as Kapali.

As regards Sauram or the Cult of the Sun-God, though Sankara considers Surya as only a subordinate deity of Sakti in his *Prapanchasara*—which is the *magnum opus*, detailing out the modes of worship of all the Hindu deities—and though we have no extant hymn of Sankara on Surya, we can be sure that he established ' Sauram ' as one of the six faiths, from the fact that in his *Prasnottara Ratna Malika* he says :

" Who is the sustainer of the worlds?" " Surya "

(*Ko Jagadbharta* ; *Sooh*) and again,

" Whom should the enlightened ones worship ?" "The Lord who dwells in Gayatri, the Sun God and Fire."

(*Ko brahmanai rupasyo*; *Gayatryarkagni gocharah Sambhuh*)

We have it from the *Saura Purana* that Sankara was himself an avatar of Surya.

Thus it is clear that Sankara was Shanmata Sthapaka. He shed off his mortal coils in Kanchi only after the leaders of the six faiths, who were his converts, reported to him that the faiths had been stabilised throughout the nation in the new form given by Sankara which really was their original form. It is significant that while Sankara (like Dakshinamurti) is usually represented in sculptures only with his four disciples who spread the philosophy of *advaita*, in his most important shrine in Kamakoshta, six disciples are shown in the pedestal (See Inset facing title page). They may, in all possibility, be the expounders of the Shanmatas. Two of them are not Sannyasins, their head not covered with cloth. But since they do not have the *upavita* they could not be *brahmacharins* or *grhastas* either. One may conclude they were *viragama tantrics*, newly won over to the Smarta tradition.

" The celestial wish-yielding tree of Sankara taking its root in the Vedas, and spreading for branches the Shan-matas, gave out to the world at large a rich yield of the fruits of Illumination"—thus says *Anandagireeya.*

For those who are not satisfied with all these and still demand 'internal evidence', we may point out that the six qualities of God which Sankara refers to in the beginning of the Gita Bhashya most appositely fit in with the essential attributes of each of the six divinities (and which incidentally is a slight variation of the traditional six *bhagas*). Says Sankara : *Sa cha Bhagavan Jnanaisvarya sakti bala veerya tejobhih sada sampanna* : The Lord is ever full with the six attributes of *Jnana* (Knowledge : *Siva*) ; *Aisvarya* (Lordship : *Vishnu*) ; *Sakti* (Power : *Sakti*) ; *Bala* (Strength : *Ganapati*) ; *Veerya* (Valour : *Kumara*) and *Teja* (Splendour : *Surya*).

Some scholars, especially those who are not of advaitic persuasion, take objection to the word ' sthapaka ' by which they mean the Founder. They contend that these six faiths had been obtaining since long before Sankara and therefore he could not be called Shan-mata-sthapaka. We would respectfully point out to them that followers of Sankara never claim for him the ' foundership ' of these cults. By ' Sthapana ', they mean only revival, reformation and stabilization. As Dr. T. M. P. Mahedevan has pointed out, Sthapana here should be taken in the sense in which Lord Krishna uses it in the *Gita*, when He says that He manifests on this world for *Dharma Sam-sthapana.* It is not as though the Lord founds a new *dharma* every time He incarnates; but He only revives and stabilizes the Dharmic way of life in each of His avatars.

There are the doubting Thomases who wonder whether Sankara who propounded the Truth of the Attributeless Absolute, could have done so much for the worship of these six Personal Gods. But any open-minded reader of his *Bhashyas* and *Prakarana granthas* will clearly see that devotion to personal God is given an honoured place in his *jnana marga*, as the greatest aid for mental concentration and ultimately mental abnegation. So it is but natural that he took upon himself the task of uplifting the generality to this stage of *bhakti* or devotion. As Dr. V. Raghavan puts it, ' The strong tradition cannot be dismissed that our Great Acharya refined and purified the methods of worship in many of our shrines, abolished violent forms of offerings, reduced the ferocious aspects of some of the deities......' His hymns like *Dvadasalinga stotra*, extolling the twelve sacred places of Siva, *Sivananda-lahari*, which explicitly refers to Srisailam, *Subrahmanya Bhujangam* which graphically describes the temple at Tiruchendur and its approaches, *Ranganatha Ashtaka* which picturesquely describes Srirangam prove beyond doubt that Sankara had undertaken Kshetratana in the

regular orthodox way throughout Bharat and offered these prayers to the Divinities enshrined there. His *Bhashya* on the *Devata Adhikarana* of the *Brahma Sutras* (Adhyaya 1, Pada 3, Sutras 26-33) should make the position very clear to any impartial mind.

Once the unholy and irrational adjuncts were shed off, it was not difficult for the *tantrics* to accept the authority of the Vedas over the tantras. They claimed independence from the Vedas only so as to enable them to introduce sensational and cheap features, and have a free scope for their emotions to surge up. As they gave up these under Sankara's persuasion, they automatically also acknowledged the authority of the Vedas.

In fact the great seers who gave the great *agamas* and *tantras* themselves said that these codes of worship only stem from the Vedic root. *E. g.*, in the *Kularnava Tantra*, Siva says to Sakti that this *tantra* takes its origin in the Vedas (*Tasmat Vedatmakam Sastram Kaulam*). The later-day Sivacharya Sri Srikanta also says : " We find no divergence between Veda and Siva *agama* " (*Veda sivagamayormadhye na bhedam pasyamah*). *Agamas and tantras* came in only to prescribe the modes of worship and religious practices for all sections of the people—all castes, including ladies, while the Vedas mainly prescribe the rites for a particular section, who have to perform them for the welfare of the whole of humanity.

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One may ask : " Why throw light on this Shan-mata aspect of the Acharya, which, though a great mission of harmony, only touches the Hindu fold and is not universal like his Advaita?" True. But the spirit which sees each of the Shan-matas as revelations of one and the same Truth, *ipso facto*, sees other religions of the world also in a similar light. As Sankara had to work out his mission of harmony within the structure of Hinduism, he did not have the necessity to touch upon alien faiths. But he has unequivocally said that any *jiva* and every *jiva* irrespective of his caste or creed is eligible for Enlightenment. So, acceptance of the Shan-mata scheme within the Vedic framework is only contextual; it is an unmistakable pointer to his acceptance of Enlightenment as a universal principle.

Again, the basic principle of the Shan-matas is universal, though the Shan-matas themselves are only relevant to the Hindus. That basis is *Bhakti*, or devotion, or love. The world is in dire need of this message of love. So the message of love, or message of heart, especially from Sankara who is invariably extolled for the qualities of head, is of inestimable value to the world today.

This is the *raison d'etre* of the Conference and the Souvenir.

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Many are those who have helped the fruition of this twin-project of the Conference and the Souvenir. Our heart goes out in deep gratitude to one and all of them.

The donors who made the Conference and Souvenir possible, come in first. It is because of their unstinted help that this voluminous Souvenir could be planned and brought out as a *pucca* book, without advertisements. A special word of profound thanks is due to Shri S. G. Ratnam Ayyar of Venus Pictures and Shri V. Vaidyasubramania Ayyar in this connection.

It will be *as* impossible on the part of the Editor of this Souvenir to give adequate expression of his gratefulness to Shri T. Sadasivam of Kalki, *as* it will be unwanted, almost seem unwarranted, on the part of Shri T. Sadasivam. Suffice it to say he was the live-wire of the project.

Shri N. Ramaratnam of *Kalaimagal* is the spine to this Souvenir. He is bound with it in many roles, from printer to proof-reader ; and so the Editor feels deeply bounden to him.

We convey our hearty thankfulness to all the contributors to the Souvenir, the Illumined Souls Frithjof Schuon (Swiss) and Marco Pallis (Greek), and the Venerable Rajaguru of Thailand, Vamadeva Muni standing foremost among them—and incidentally also to the participants in the Conference ; particularly to Dr. V. Raghavan who conducted the Conference so ably, and to Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan whose ideas permeate throughout the Souvenir including in a large measure, this Preface; Shri K. Nilakanta Aiyar of B. G. Paul & Co., for materials supplied; to Dr. N. Veezhinathan, who got many articles for this Souvenir, translated some of the contributions, and assisted in proof-reading ; Prof. P. Sankaranarayanan, who rendered into English some of the articles; Shri Ramakrishna Aiyar, Formerly of the *Hindu*, for his English renderings of many of His Holiness's discourses ; Shri R. Nagaswamy, Director of Archaeology, Madras for his ideas and also help in getting a good number of articles ; Shri S. S. Vasan for lending us many of the blocks and original pictures ; Shri Silpi, Vinu, Kalpana and other artists who have made this Souvenir a feast for the eyes; Shri V. Vaidyanathan of *Kalki*, Shri Sridhar (Bharanidharan) of *Vikatan* and many other kindred spirits; Sri Atma of *Kalki* who was interwoven with the twin-projects in each and every aspect; and last, but not least, Shri V. Meenakshisundaram and other friends of the Association for Hindu Dharma, who did commendable spade-work and set the ball rolling.

*

The power behind, beneath and within this Project was His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. Words are helpless in expressing our gratitude to Him, for having so graciously chosen us as His tools. Tools often fail. But He will forgive.

Madras —EDITOR.

SECTION I

GENERAL

INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

By

H. H. JAGADGURU SRI CHANDRASEKHARENDRA SARASVATI SVAMIJI

Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

There is no meaning in the rivalries between the followers of the different faiths. The attempts at religious conversion are like those of the drivers of all sorts of conveyances at the railway station to "catch" passengers. While the behaviour of the drivers is understandable, that of the protagonists of religions is meaningless. As the God of all religious denominations is one, there is no need to give up one religion and adopt another. This does not mean that all the religions are uniform; uniformity is not important; what is important is unity; and all our faiths are united in proclaiming the supreme reality of the One God. The religions are like the arches of a bridge. To a man standing under a particular arch, that one would loom large and the others would appear small. But the fact is that all arches are similarly constructed and are of the same dimension. As God cannot be different, why should there be decrying of any religion? The religions are many only to cater to the different tastes of men. This should not lead to religious fanaticism and hatred.

The grandeur of Hinduism is that it consciously recognizes the unity of religions. That the different religions are not contradictory of, or antagonistic to, one another, but are only aspects of one Eternal Religion, is not a mere theory or abstract speculation with the Hindus; it is an article of faith. It is a tragedy, therefore, that there should be religious quarrels among the Hindus themselves.

A major division in Hinduism is that between Vaishnavism and Saivism. According to all our Scriptures and the teachings of all the great masters, Siva and Vishnu are one. Our ancients have taught us in several ways the unity of Godhead. The conceptions of Nataraja and Rangaraja are complementary to each other. In fact, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are but different aspects of the same Deity. A similar complementariness is to be noticed in the idea of God as male and female, as father and mother. The integrated views of the Deity as *Harihara*, and as *Ardhanarisvara*, have a deep significance, and take us nearer the supreme truth.

There is an unfounded criticism that Advaita accords no place to God in its scheme. The truth, however, is that even the Advaita outlook one gains only through the Grace of God. The most important item in one's daily programme should be divine worship. Those moments in one's life are vain which are unrelated to the endeavour to bespeak the blessings of the Lord.

As a spiritual discipline, the worship of one's chosen form of the Deity is indispensable for one's progress towards enlightenment. Especially at the initial stages it serves as the go-cart which helps the child to learn to walk. While praying one may ask for the fulfilment of one's personal ends; but the best prayer is that which asks God to dower the entire world with His blessings; for the devotee of the

Lord should look upon all mankind as one.

A resurgent and strong Hinduism is necessary not only for the salvation of the Hindus but also for the betterment of the world. The Veda which is the basic scripture of Hinduism is not a sectarian text. Whatever truth was declared by any great prophet can be traced to the Vedas. On the river-banks of the Vedic *dharma*, the various religions are like the bathing-ghats. In the distant past, the Vedic religion was spread throughout the world. Gradually other religions appeared in the other parts of the globe, each emphasizing some aspects of the religion of the Veda. To India belongs the privilege of preserving the ancient *dharma* in its purity and comprehensive nature.

A disciplined and ordered life is what is taught in the Veda. The main Vedic disciplines are: performance of one's duties (*karmanushthana*), cultivation of the cardinal virtues (*sila*), worship of the Deity (*upasana*), and acquisition of wisdom (*jnana*). To live like an animal, eating, sleeping, and begetting, is to debase the precious human birth. We must learn to put a curb on the animal propensities, and purify our minds. By good deeds we must convert the material goods into religious merit (*punya*) which alone is legal tender in the worlds to come. Earning and hoarding should not become the ends of life. A career-oriented education is no education. What should first be inculcated in young minds is respect for *dharma*. There is no point in asking people to increase their standard of living; what should be aimed at is improvement of the quality of life. The frail mortal cannot improve his life by self-effort alone; he must seek God's Grace through worship and meditation. It is by bathing in the holy waters of meditation that the mind gets cleansed of its impurities. The mind so cleansed develops the power of discrimination; it gains the ability to distinguish the real from the unreal, which paves the way for the dawn of wisdom (*jnana*).

—From a discourse of His Holiness

CONCERTED ACTION : NEED OF THE HOUR

By

H. H. Sri Visvesa Tirtha Svamiji of Pejavar

(Pithadhipati of Jagadguru Sri Madhvacharya Samsthanam, Udipi)

There is a story, according to which, a demon obtained by his penance, a boon that he should not be vanquished or killed by any person singly or by a number of persons joining together. On account of this boon, he became a tyrant and began terrorising people. So God, in His mercy, took the form of Harihara, and punished the demon. Harihara is neither a dual personality, because there is only one body, nor a single personality because He combines in Himself the attributes of both Vishnu and Siva.

Adharma is gaining upper hand in this world and it cannot be driven away by the efforts of any school of Vedanta, working alone, or by the efforts of different schools of Vedanta, each working in its own particular way. The task requires the cooperative efforts of all schools of thought, coming together, to carry out an agreed programme. We must develop the strength necessary to vanquish the demon of *Adharma* by such concerted action. If the devotees of both Hari (Vishnu) and Hara (Siva), bear this in mind and work in harmony and cooperation, then our cause is bound to succeed and the welfare of humanity is assured.

Students of Mahabharata are aware that *Aaranya Parva* (period of exile) is followed by *Ajnaata Parva* (incognito period) and *Udyoga Parva* (period of effort). Like Dharmaraja of the Mahabharata, Dharma is now in exile in the forest in this land. Even in the forest, friends and supporters of Dharmaraja were able to meet him and live in his company. Similarly, though *dharma* was in exile, *dhaarmikas* were able to keep the company of *dharma*, till recently. That stage has passed, and *dharma*, has gone into *ajnaata vaasam* (living incognito). Even *dhaarmikas* are now unable to locate where *dharma* is. Therefore, time is now ripe for the next stage, *Udyoga Parva*. We must awake, arise, and act in unity to enthrone *dharma* once again in our heart.

The Vedas speak of God as having a thousand heads and a thousand arms ; but nowhere is it said that He has a thousand hearts. There is one and only one heart. Similarly, *Advaita, Dvaita, Visishtaadvaita*, etc., are nothing but different facets of the Vedic Dharma. They have a common heart and that is the *Vedas*. Such being the case, there is no difficulty for people owing allegiance to different schools of Vedantic thought, coming together, and working for the establishment of *dharma* and *bhakti*, a task which all of us should perform.

I have great pleasure in associating myself with His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya Svami of Kamakoti Peetam, whose heart is broad enough to accommodate

different schools of Vedantic thought, for the welfare of humanity. India is a country with a tradition for religious toleration. There is freedom in this land for preaching, not only different *sampradaayas* of the Vedic religion, but also for preaching religions antagonistic to the Vedic religion. Not only that, there is freedom even to those who deny God. *His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya Svami is the personification of that tolerent culture and tradition.* In association with such a great soul, it is possible to work and re-establish *dharma* in this land.

SANKARA AND SHANMATA

By

DR. V. RAGHAVAN

The conference on Sankara and Shanmata —to commemorate which this Souvenir is brought out—may be said to lay special emphasis on the comparatively more popular side of the contribution of Sankara to Indian philosophy and religion. In the traditional epithets with which we hail him we describe him not only as "the establisher of Advaita", but also as "the establisher of the six ways of worship". "Shanmata-sthapana-Acharya". This is as it should be. For what would be more natural? One could not have been only the Waterer of the roots of a tree without at the same time being called the one who made the flowers and fruits of that tree to blossom and taste better. Indeed to have firmly established Advaita means automatically to have rejuvenated and reinforced all the legitimate ways of worship current in tradition.

If we take the historical view, it was in the golden age of the Pallavas in South India that the "counter attack" of Hinduism was delivered by a galaxy of brilliant Psalmists, Saints and Philosophers and recovery was made of ground lost to Buddhism and Jainism and other heretical sects and corrupt practices.

Any true Saint and Philosopher has always had a twofold role to play: One his academic core in which he maintained his scholastical positions against adversaries in works of philosophy and logic of the most abstruse order and the other, in which his personality kept itself in constant contact with the people and their faith and methods of worship. Sometimes the abstract research scholarship of today might fail to realise this essential 'amphibionism' of 'the man of the hour' or 'the Avatara purusha' as we would call him. The Advaita of Sankara, to adopt a recent expressive word, is a large umbrella; it is accommodative and expansively so. All forms of personal worship of our own or other traditions of the world can come under it. All through the Bhashyas on the Upanishads, the Bhagavat Gita, and the Brahma sutra, one finds almost at every step Sankara now waxing eloquent on the Impersonal, now on the personal Narayana and now gliding from one to the other without any jerk or stiltedness. This should dismiss all criticisms that Bhakti has no real place in Sankara. Well, a concordance of Stotra literature in Sanskrit will show up the answer: A very large part of the output of hymns has been from those of the Advaitic persuasion. It stands to reason to suppose that, according to the needs of the age and the needs of the people at that time, Sankara. like the Alwars and the Nayanmars, visited the great temples, and sang of the celebrated deities there. Because not only religious doctrines but religious institutions were also in

danger. The strong tradition in South Indian temples cannot be dismissed that our great Acharya refined and purified the methods of worship in many of our shrines, abolished violent forms of offerings, reduced the ferocious aspects (ugra kala) of some of the deities and made them all more benevolent and approached by Vedic and other normal forms of daily worship. To this effect it is believed that, he, the fountain-head of Mantra Sastra, prepared the Yantras and established them in the sanctum of the famous deities which even now continue to draw millions of pilgrims from near and far and be a solace and blessing to them all.

The mention of six ways of worship, Shanmata, was only to point out the more dominant ways of the worship of the people. The Shanmatas are not to be confused with the six systems of Indian philosophy. They refer to the six prominent forms of worship of divinity in six personal forms. All of them fall under the Saguna Upasana. In the oldest form of worship, as history shows, there was a plethora of personal deities to which groups of people, both Rulers and subjects, attached themselves. This was only a question of their being specially devoted to their preferences and no cult exclusiveness and antagonism. This heritage had come from Vedas themselves which had already preached the doctrine of the One Truth spoken diversely by the Wise and all rivers, flowing from every side, falling finally into the same ocean. It is recorded that the ancient Indian following the Sruti and Smrti performed the Panchya Yajnas every day and followed up the same with the Pancha Pujas. The sloka quoted in *Smrti Muktavali* says that the householder devoted to the performance of the five daily sacrifices shall also worship daily the following five deities: Aditya (Surya), Ambika (Sakti), Vishnu, Ganapati and Mahesvara (Siva).

आदित्यमम्बिकां विष्णुं गणनाथं महेश्वरम् ।
पञ्चयज्ञपरो नित्यं गृहस्थः पञ्च पूजयेत् ॥

This was a liberal and adjustable framework allowing internal scope for the doctrine of Ishtadevata. The same smrti text which refers to this also provides the scheme of this 'Panchayatana', as it is called, for being rearranged internally according as the devotee laid stress on Vishnu, Siva or the other ones. It is noteworthy to mention in this connection that the distinguished authority on Dharma Sastra Mm. Dr. P. V. Kane says that "The worship of these deities called Panchayatana Puja is said to have been popularised by the great Sankaracharya."

All the ancient temples, from the time of the cave-temples of the Pallavas, have shrines for all the Panchayatana deities.

True to its essential nature Sankara's philosophy came to consolidate and not to destroy things of value. It is sometimes asked: What was wrong with any of the forms of worship before that should have made it necessary to reform them? 'Sthapana' may just mean putting a thing back in its position. It may also include elements of purification or emphasis on the true and basic ideas which give a new life and attract a wider world of worshippers. It has been said already that in respect of some of the worships there were violent and heretical practices. In certain forms of Saivism objectionable practices were prevalent. Even so among the worshippers of the Mother Goddess. There must have been some crudities clinging around the worship of Ganapati also. Sankara's great gift to the country in respect of Devi worship is the purified form of Sri Vidya. Even in the case of other forms of worship not involving violence or repulsive rites the approach of his philosophy gave a new perspective which was itself a clearance in many ways of a lopsidedness of outlook. One type of Narayana-worshippers should not think that there have not been other historical worshippers of that form.

Aditya is rightly mentioned first in the Panchayatana; He is the Vedic deity of supreme importance adored by all every day through the Gayatri, praised in the numberless hymns in the Veda and, in the Upanishads again described as the focus of contemplation for the ultimate realisation of the Supreme. In fact even the Vishnu of the Veda is Aditya. In his Bhashya on Kenopanishad, where suddenly the Upanishad mentions the appearance on the firmament of the enchanting form

of Goddess Uma Haimavati, the Acharya identifies Her with Vidya-Knowledge. The Rgvedic hymn which we use in our daily worship for Ganapati—a hymn on the God of knowledge and sacred lore, Brahmanas-pati—underlines the inner significance of the concept of Ganapati as the Lord of learning and inspiration, an idea which pervades and persists in Sanskrit as well as in Tamil literature.

The addition of Kumara takes the above 'Panchayatana' to the fuller 'Shanmata'. From the pre-Christian centuries, from the times of the Epics, the worship of Skanda-Kumara-Kartikeya was widespread all over North India; and in the South, the worship of this God assumed special proportions. Here again, in the midst of all the mass of myth, one is constantly reminded of Skanda (Dandapani) as the embodiment of Jnana, as the expounder of the meaning of OM, a conception going up to the antique Chandogya Upanishad where Sanatkumara, the Boy Eternal, who taught the Brahma Vidya, is declared as none else than Skanda. The triune aspects of Siva, Uma and Skanda, (Father, Mother and Son) form the composite deity of Somaskanda, the most common form of Siva worshipped in all our temples.

The Trinity Sankara, Narayana, and Devi-Narayani naturally loom larger in our worship. In fact the close 'family relation' among the three should induce in the anthropomorphic minds of the general worshippers, a sense of greater understanding. The composite form of Sankara-Narayana or Hari-Hara, a form in which one of the first Alwars described the Deity at the Seven Hills,—a form prevent in South-East Asia too,—is also of similar significance. Long ago the great Poet of India, Kalidasa, declared that there was no superiority or inferiority among them, for it is the One that splits into three.

एकैव मूर्तिर्बिभिदे त्रिधा सा
सामान्यमेषां प्रथमावरत्वम् ॥

Kumara. VII. 44.

It has been rightly pointed out that the difference between Hari and Hara is not in the root which is the same, but only in the suffix, *pratyaya.* Pratyaya also means the way in which we see things. If we see difference, there it is; if we do not see, there is none. This then is the staple feature of Smartaism.

All these various modes of worship are rendered sensible and fruitful if they are understood as different symbols or supports that one takes to, according to the aptitude or inclination of one's mind, *adhikara* and *ruchi*, for sustaining one's contemplation. They are, even as the very first of them, namely, one's own Guru all through gracious and effective till we are blessed with the final realisation; when that comes all this is merged into one with that Supreme Effulgence.

The master, the grand-preceptor of Sankara, said in his inimitable and pithy words: "They quarrel among themselves; Advaita has no quarrel with anyone."

परस्परं विरुध्यन्ते तैरयं न विरुध्यते ।

The message of Sankara is receiving its due fulfilment. *i.e.*, in depth and range of applicability as is seen in the writings of the foremost international exponent of this advaitic viewpoint, Aldous Huxley, who says in his *Ends and Means*: "It is the business of the rational idealist to harp continuously upon this all-important fact. In this way, perhaps, he may be able to mitigate the evil tendencies which history shows to be inherent in the way of devotion and the belief in a personal deity". By and large people have become today more liberal in their modes of worship and their visits to temples or teachers. The general hunger is religious and spiritual, not sectarian and denominational. It is the hope of all those connected with the present conference that this spirit will grow in strength and be the sustaining force of the unique way of Hinduism.

BHAKTI

By

H.H. Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

Amongst the factors that are aids to Liberation, devotion (*bhakti*) is the highest says Sri Sankara Bhagavadpada—*Moksha saadhana saamagryaam Bhakti-reva gareeyasee.*

There should be a Power behind all this creation. There should be a Power dispensing the fruits of our action. Attuning our mind to that Power, or God, with love is called *bhakti* or devotion.

By *bhakti* and prayer we do not seek to change what God ordains. They are meant only to remove our impurities and endow us with strength to bear His dispensation with tranquillity.

One of the natural qualities of animate beings is to love. But in this transient world our love too is not permanent. Either our attitude of love towards the beloved changes, or else the beloved himself passes away. There is no greater loss to a human being than the loss of this love. *Bhakti* comes in to avert this great loss. In *bhakti*, our natural instinct of love is turned upon the Origin and sustaining Power of all the impermanent things that we love. Once we begin to love that Origin, or God, our very attitude of love gets purified. Our love of God grows more and more intense, because it is a relationship between the Cause and the Effect, and with our advance in *bhakti* we begin to look upon all things as God—they also being Effects of the same Cause—and therefore love them too as intensely as we love God.

Our past love towards fellow-beings was impure with selfishness, and in fact did not deserve to be called love at all. Now with the consciousness of the One Origin common to all, that love itself becomes pure and devoid of any trace of selfishness. Therefore the possibility of a change in our attitude of love towards the beloved is also removed. Even when the beloved disappears we are not grief-stricken, because our love of the Origin of all that are beloved of us remains.

Yet another use of *bhakti*: God is conceived of as the embodiment of all virtues. When we love a thing intensely we are moved to partake of the qualities of that thing ourselves. So when one loves and worships God, this love and worship produce in him slowly and gradually a thirst to acquire those ideal virtues embodied by God. With the passage of time the devotee, *Bhakta,* blossoms into the possessor of those ideal qualities.

Bhakti has a supreme purpose behind these. Control of the mind is most necessary for spiritual enlightenment. The mind is checked from wavering towards evil propensities by making it one-pointed on what is good and loving and beautiful. Is there anything more good and loving and beautiful than God? Though ultimately He is beyond good and evil, love and hate, beauty and ugliness, and in that Absolute State can only be realized by one-ness with Him—He, in his infinite mercy, also becomes the abode of all

good attributes for us to love and meditate upon. In the initial stages the mind cannot dwell on the formless Absolute, but it is drawn towards that Absolute when conceived of as the Personal God of all good attributes. Concentrating our minds on Him is *bhakti*. When the perfect state of one-pointedness is reached the mind itself vanishes, leaving the Self alone to shine in all its radiance as one with the attributeless Absolute, which is Enlightenment and Emancipation.

To obtain the peace of the state of that Enlightenment which is called *Mukti*, *Moksha* or Liberation, *bhakti* is necessary. The *mukta*, i.e., the Liberated One, who experiences the joy and peace of Self-realization (*aatmaanubhava*), realizes the non-difference between his self and the Supreme Self. When a person who has obtained the *advaitaanubhava* (non-duality) looks at other men and their behaviour and at the world with dualities and distinctions, he sees them all as a grand divine sport, a *leela*.

When great *jnaanis*, who have realized the advaitic Absolute, wake up to world-consciousness and contemplate on the beauteous form of the God they had experienced, they wish to linger a little longer in contemplation of that Form of the Formless, and are even loth to go back to their *samaadhi* state of thoughtless Oneness, for attaining which they had all along strenuously toiled. It is to this aspect that Sri Suka refers in the Bhagavata, when he says:

Aatmaaraamaascha munayah
nirgranthaapy Urukrame
Kurvanti ahaitukeem bhaktim
ittham bhootaguno Harih

(Even sages who delight in the experience of their inner Self, though free from all shackles, yet engage themselves, *from no motive*, in devotion to Hari. Such is the excellence of God.)

Such a *bhakti* is *ahaitukee*, having no motive. The *bhakti* before God-realization is *saadhana* (step or aid) for *moksha*, and it is motivated by that end. But when having attained the state of *moksha*, such *jnanis* voluntarily revert to contemplation of the Form of God, this *bhakti* has no ulterior purpose to serve. It is an end in itself. It is pursued for the intrinsic delight it affords. In that sense it is *ahaitukee bhakti*, motiveless devotion.

It is to the same effect that Sri Madhusoodana Sarasvati, who wrote the monumental treatise, *Advaita Siddhi*, and who is an *advaitin par excellence*, said when he sang in praise of Sri Krishna in the following verse:

Dhyaanaabhyaasa vaseekritena
manasaa yannirgunam nishkalam,
Jyotih kinchana yogino yadiparam
pasyanti pasyantu te;
Asmaakam tu tadeva lochana
chamatkaaraaya bhooyaaschiram,
Kaalindee pulineshu yatkimapi
tanneelam maho dhaavati

(Let those who see Thee with their mind under control by the practice of *dhyaana*, see Thy supreme effulgence which is without attributes and without action. But to me the dark blue Form which sports in the sands of Kalindee river is alone the source of unending delight.)

To Sri Madhusoodana Sarasvati, the joy of beholding in his mind's eye the sport of Krishna, becomes greater than even the joy of non-dual Self-realization.

When *bhakti* fructifies into *jnana*, the *mumukshu* (One on the point of *mukti*) seems to feel a pang over the prospect of *jnana* engulfing *bhakti*. This is analogous to the loving parent who, having made with great enthusiasm all the preparations for giving his daughter away in marriage, feels a wrench and sheds tears at the actual moment of *kanyaadaana*, handing over the bride to the bridegroom. A *mumukshu* seemed to be in a similar plight when about to attain *jnana* by the grace of God, he said:

Bhasmoddhoolana, bhadramastu
bhavate rudraakshamaale subhe,
Haa sopaanaparampare
girisutaakaantaalayaalamkrite;
Adyaaraadhana toshitena vibhunaa
yushmatsaparyaa sukhaa,
Lokochhedini mokshanaamani
mahaamohe nileeyaamahe

This Sivabhakta, who is on the threshold of *moksha* (Liberation) and who has no longer any use for smearing of sacred ashes, or the wearing of *rudraakshamaala,* or other steps of the path of *bhakti,* taking leave of these erstwhile adjuncts to devotion exclaims: "May it be well with you all. By the grace of All-Pervasive Paramesvara, who is now pleased by my devotion, I am about to pass on to the great *moha* (darkness) which is called *moksha* (Liberation), and which will cut me away from the delights of my association with you all".

Thus *bhakti* has a double place in the scheme of spiritual life. It leads the aspirant to *mukti* and the *mukta* (freed one) loves to dwell in the realm of *bhakti,* laying aside for a while the inarticulate bliss of *samaadhi.* Therefore, none of us need pray straightaway for *mukti.* We should ask for *bhakti* which will lead to *mukti.*

* * *

True Bhakti or devotion is that condition of a devotee's mind when it is unable to bear even a moment's separation from the shelter of God, and when even if it is forcibly withdrawn from that shelter, by force of circumstances, it struggles and rushes back and attaches itself to God, like a needle to a magnet.

Ankolam nijabeeja santati-
rayaskaantopalam soochika
Saadhvee naijavibhum lata
kshitiruham sindhussaridvallabham |
Prapnoteeha yathaa tathaa
Pasupatheh paadaaravinda dvayam
Chetovrttirupetya tishthati sadaa saa
bhaktirityuchyate ||

The verse occurs in *Sivaananda Lahari,* and in it, Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada has explained what real bhakti is. The relationship between the devotee and Isvara is explained with reference to five examples. They are: the tree known as *ankolam* and its seeds; the lodestone and the needle; the chaste woman and her husband; the creeper and the tree; and the river and the ocean. The *ankola* tree is found in the forest. It is said that when its fruit falls to the ground, the seeds, liberated from the fruit by some compelling force within, move close to the trunk of the tree itself, gradually climb up, and get inseparably attached to the tree. When a needle is brought near a lodestone, it rushes towards the stone and gets itself attached to it. Similarly, the mind of a devotee rushes towards God and finds a haven there. The next example is that of a chaste woman and her husband. The term *vibhuh* used in this verse to denote husband, is significant. The literal meaning of *vibhuh* is, 'one who pervades everywhere'. The idea Sri Sankara wants to convey by using the term *vibhuh* is that a true *pativrata* is so saturated with the thought of her husband that her mind sees her husband alone whichever way it turns. So also the man of devotion, *bhakta* sees only God in everything around him.

The example of creeper and tree is next given to indicate the mind's frantic efforts to get itself attached to Isvara like a creeper to a tree. As a creeper grows, its shoots away hither and thither, in an attempt to get a hold on something to which they can attach themselves. The moment the shoots come into contact with a neighbouring tree, the creeper winds itself around that tree, as if hugging it with affection. Even if we detach the creeper from the tree, it will again, without much loss of time, get itself entwined to the tree. The mind of the devotee is constantly in search of Isvara, and the moment He is realized, it attaches itself to Him inseparably.

The last example is that of the river and ocean. A river has a small origin on a mountain. In the initial stage of its course, which can be compared to our own childhood, the river is noisy, plays about by jumping from one rock to another, and is restless and so flows fast. Its speed reflects its anxiety to join the ocean. When nearing the sea, the river becomes calm and placid. This state can be compared to a woman's humility, shyness, and serenity in the presence of her husband. The ocean, being a loving husband, rushes forward to receive the river in its arms. That is why the river water is saltish for some distance inland from

its mouth. Similarly, the restless soul finds serenity when it reaches the proximity of God, and finally gets engulfed in that ocean of Supreme Bliss.

Sri Sankara has expounded *advaita tattva* (non-dual merger with the Supreme Soul) both in the main theme of the verse and in the illustrating similes. Water from the sea evaporates into cloud and returns to the earth as rain. The rain water goes back to the sea as rivers. In that way a circle is completed. The river and the sea, though apparently two, are in reality one. By the process of evaporation the volume of the sea is not reduced; neither is its volume increased by the inflow of river waters. In the same way, everything in this universe is part of God. He is everything and everything ultimately merges in Him. He is Full always, and His Fulness is in no way affected either by creation or by the merger in Him of the created beings. The human soul, *jeevatma*, is restless like a creeper, in search of a support to sustain it, and eager to rejoin its source, like the river is to rejoin the ocean, its ultimate source. As the *jeeva* gets to be more and more proximate to God, it obtains serenity, like that which the waters of a river attain near the confluence with the sea. The *bhakta* (man of devotion), who eventually becomes a *jnani* (man of knowledge) sees only Isvara in everything, even as a *pativrata* thinks only of her husband and lord. When the soul finally finds its haven in the Paramaatma, it unites with the Paramaatma, like a creeper hugging a tree, or a needle flying to and getting attached with a magnet. Just as the needle also gets the properties of the magnet on being attached to it, so also the devotee on attaining the Supreme Soul gets identified with it. If, for any reason, the *jeeva* is forcibly detached from Isvara, it becomes restless, struggles, and eventually gets back to Isvara.

When our devotion to God is motivated by a desire to secure some earthly benefit, it ceases to be real bhakti; it becomes a barter. But when our bhakti is for our spiritual elevation, we attain the peace of the river when it is near its lord, the ocean. The devotee begins his quest for Bliss with devotion to One, Who, he thinks is outside him. When the devotion is selfless, that is, when the quest is a quest of his own real Self, the *dvaita bhaava* (the duality of God and himself) changes into *advaita bhaava*, the oneness of himself and God. He surrenders himself absolutely and unreservedly to the Paramaatma, and becomes one with that Only One.

* * *

Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita are one in the emphasis on *bhakti* to obtain God's grace. The fact that man alone, among the creatures of the world, grows vertically, whereas the other creatures grow horizontally, indicates that he should also strive to grow taller in spiritual stature. Such an eminence in stature comes from *jnana* which alone gives abiding peace or *saanti.* Man undergoes troubles and pains in a greater measure than other animals; but that is compensated for by his capacity to acquire *jnana*, which makes for the realization of Truth and the experiencing of the Joy of oneness with that Truth. Jnana itself begets this Joy or *ananda.* Isvara is of the nature of this *jnana ananda.* He is the Paramaatman in whom all auspicious qualities are fully affirmed in a superlative measure. Even as the ocean is the repository of all waters, Isvara is fulness, the All. There is no other to Him. He is the All without a second. That is advaita. *Idam sarvam Purusha eva*, all this is the Paramaatman, says the Veda. Sri Sankara expounds this truth with *yukti* (logic) and *anubhava* (experience).

But mere intellectual comprehension of it is not enough. It must be realized as a fact in one's own experience. For such realization grace of God is a pre-requisite. *Isvraanugrahaadeva pumsaam advaita vaasana.*

We begin with a feeling of distinctness from God. The predicament of worship is said to be one of duality of Deity and devotee. But even then the devotee does not feel that God is external to him and to the Universe; he has the consciousness that God is immanent in himself and in every particle of the world, in-dwelling everywhere and in every thing, however

minute. Our duty is to worship Him in this way with devotion, and if we do so, He reveals His true nature to us. The Bhagavan says in the Gita:

Bhaktyaa maam abhijaanaati
yaavaan yaschaasmi tattvatah:

The word, *bhaktyaa*, meaning 'through devotion', shows that *bhakti* is the means for the realization of the truth of God's nature. Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita are one in this emphasis on bhakti to obtain God's grace. To whatever school we belong, we should invoke His Grace through *bhakti*, leaving it to Him to reveal the truth of His nature. All Acharyas have stressed this need for *bhakti*.

Bhakti alone will keep our minds away from sin. The heart has to be kept clean through *bhakti* so that the full effect of His presence there may be realized. In the ultimate analysis, self-surrender and Self-realization are the two facets of the same thing.

* * *

Much is said about the Personal God and the Impersonal Absolute; about God with attributes and without attributes. It is only when all the colours in the light mix together that we get the colourless rays of the sun. Similarly, by the very virtue of being the abode of attributes, God becomes Nirguna, attributeless. Even people who have realized their oneness with the Impersonal God, still like to contemplate on God with form and attributes. Even when they have experienced the bliss flowing from the realization of the identity of the *jivaatma* and the *paramaatma*, and have also realized that God is in everything and everything is in God, they prefer to put aside, for a little while, the experience of this oneness with God, and to contemplate on Him as One slightly different from themselves, like the apparent difference between the waves and the ocean, and to enjoy the divine form.

* * *

As a spiritual discipline, the worship of one's chosen form of the Godhead—which is the concept of *Ishta Devata*—is indispensable for one's progress towards enlightenment. The best prayer is that which asks God to dower the entire world with His blessings; for the devotee should look upon all mankind as one.

As an item of daily worship our ancients have prescribed for us what is known as *Panchaayatana Puja*. This consists in the worship of the five forms of deities,

Aadityam Ambikaam Vishnum
Gananaatham Mahesvaram

viz., Surya (Sun-God), Sakti, Vishnu, Ganapati and Siva.

Though even the layman in India knows the beautiful personal marks of each of these divinities, in the *Panchayatana* the divinities are not usually worshipped in those forms, but are worshipped in symbols. As though taking the mind of the devotee from the forms to the formless, while at the same time giving full scope to his devotional feelings, certain symbols are worshipped in place of the *murtis*. This is an intermediary stage between form and formless—because the symbols are certain kinds of rockous formations and therefore have a form; yet they are formless in that they have no parts like face, eyes, body, hands, feet, etc.

In this *Panchayatana* scheme, Siva is worshipped in the *baana linga*, which is found in plenty in the Omkarakunda of the river Narmada (Central India). Vishnu is worshipped in the *saalagrama*, which can be had in the Gandaki river in the Himalayas. Crystals, in which Surya is worshipped, are found in Vallam in Tamilnadu. The *svarnamukhi* stone representing the Divine Mother Sakti is found in the bed of the river of that name in Andhra. The river Son flowing into the Ganga abounds in the red *sonabhadra* stones representing Ganapati.

So a house having this *panchaayatana*, with the stones from the different parts of India, is as though having the whole national consciousness frozen in it.

It is but meet that in addition to these, Kumara is also included in the *Panchaayatana*, as He is the Presiding Deity of the one remaining faith of Shan-matas.

* * *

Foreign critics of our Vedic religion fling at us the cheap gibe, "what a host

of gods and goddesses you worship!" This charge of polytheism levelled against our religion is entirely wrong and is born out of ignorance of the fundamental teachings of the Vedas. This is what Baana says on this subject:

Rajojushi janmani sattva vrttaye
Sthithau prajanaam pralaye tamasprse
Ajaaya sargasthitinaasa hetave
Trayeemayaaya trigunaatmane namah

In this verse Baana says that the One God appears in the three forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, for a three-fold purpose, namely, creation, protection and dissolution. That One is the unborn (*Aja*) and is the cause of these triple process.

Kalidasa expresses more or less the same idea when he says:

Ekaiva moortih bebhide tridhaa saa
saamaanyameshaam
, prathamaavaratvam

One *moorti* (manifestation in form) appears as three, and there is no question of any One of the Three being superior to, or inferior than, the other Two, says Kalidasa. If Brahma, Vishnu, Siva are One in essence, then, by the same token, all the gods of the Hindu pantheon are also One in the ultimate analysis. Then why this wrangling that one god is superior to the rest? Some assert that the Deity they worship is alone the highest. To a man standing under the arch at one end of a bridge, all the other arches will appear smaller than the one under which he is standing. But we are aware that all the arches of a bridge are of the same span. Similarly, to the votary of a particular Deity, all the other deities will appear inferior on account of his attachment to the Deity of his choice. But the truth is that all Deities are manifestations, in particular ways, of one God.

Parabrahma, which is without attributes, without form, becomes the personal God or Isvara to perform these three functions of creation, protection and dissolution.

The forms may appear different, the names may be different, but the Truth is one. It is the One that becomes three, and then thirty-three, and then thirty-three crores, according to the numberless varieties of the functions of Divinity. —*Gleanings from His Holiness's discourses.*

GODLESSNESS

By

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

The universe of matter with its unchangeable laws does not explain itself. That it exists does not satisfy the human mind, although the atheist may refuse to give further thought to it. At that point, beyond which reason cannot operate, Faith begins. This is Religion. It covers ground which science cannot explore. In particular it gives rise to commandments as to how men should act towards one another and themselves.

India's hope lies in her intellectuals taking the people back to God from Whom they have been recently made to stray away. Mammon has secured a victory and inflicted a defeat on Religion. This defeat should be retrieved.

The learned dialectics of Hinduism will not save us, however famous in the world of philosophy it may make us. What is wanted is that God should not only be accepted in intellectual ratiocination but that He should be present with us, with every individual among us in his acts and behaviour towards fellow-beings, in public and private life. We want a nation of God-fearing men, not only praying for grace during distress but guiding us in all our doings. Godlessness must go.

Our bodies were built by the Sun, the great Father luminary overhead. We get from him all that life requires. Every atom and every particle making up our flesh, blood and bones depends on the Sun. Without the heat and the light he gives us, we would be extinct. The human mind, likewise, has grown from the beginning of time on something, not visible like the blazing sun, but on something equally real and powerful, Religion. All human thought from the time that human thought began, was based and grew on the sense of an Unseen Mind governing the universe. The human mind was born and bred out of Religion and it lives therefore on it every moment, even as the body sustains itself on sunlight. If Religion goes, the human candle will go out with it. Man will revert to the status of an untamed hungry animal.

We want not merely the acceptance of God in a dialectic debate. We need God as a living force for guidance in life. If we kill the *aatman* we shall wander in a world of dense darkness. As the body cannot sustain itself without sunlight, the mind cannot sustain itself without an Aatman, without Religion with which it began and grew from time immemorial. A divorce of the human mind from Religion will mean its death. If we take a fish out of the water in which it began to live and adjust its growth and its every movement, it dies. So also if we take man out of Religion, his wonderful mind-structure will go out of existence.

Asuryaa naama te lokaa andhena
tamasaavrta
Taanste pretyaabhi gachchanti ye ke
chaatmahano janaah —Isa. 3

Atheism is a refusal to think beyond a stated material line, a denial of the need for faith. The godlessness that prevails now as our besetting sin is much worse than atheism. It is a defiance of God and

God's rule. Our masses were not godless, but the product of the modern advance of knowledge, our intellectuals, have not merely become theoretical atheists, but have sold themselves to a bold godlessness which has ruined national life in all spheres. It is this godlessness, which is different from atheism, that we must cure. All our maladies really result from it. Atheism is passive non-cooperation with the idea of God. Godlessness is not only that, but a revolt against the moral rules of conduct that have issued out of all religions.

Symptomatic treatment will not achieve a cure. Each step in symptomatic improvement leads to a corresponding and equivalent evil. We must go to the root of the matter. Having diagnosed it, we must not shirk to apply the remedy but work to get rid of the disease in a radical way. This is the task set for us now.

This is the real issue in every election even if we wish to decide it that way. Let us be evolutionists if we so choose, but let us be evolutionists such as great Darwin was without denying God or disregarding His moral governance. Every moment let us remember and realize the presence of God and be guided by Him in the working of our minds. It is man's mind that gave man his special survival potential and made him what he is, supreme monarch among living beings. This sovereignty is not merely a sovereignty of material power but a spiritual privilege. Let not our elite kill the religion of the masses and kill themselves, but relearn the truth set down by the Rshi about what happens to *Aatma hano janaah*.

Printed money we must have, but let us get as much of it as we can get through honest work, not by over-reaching one another. The function of money is to evalute honest work done and to serve as a legal security for that value when we need it. Let us not overassess its utility and realize our folly when it is too late.

Religion is our real asset, religion which makes us God-fearing and straight in all our dealings, and increases our credit in society and the credit of our people in the society of nations. The printed stuff called money, and jobs, self-respect, status, everything will come in due course if we go back to God, leaving godlessness behind as a loathsome way of life which has recently poisoned our national life. The Bhakti way is the only way to God and to good life. Only on the basis of that faith can we live and do our duties to ourselves and to society with detachment and equanimity, and secure lasting happiness. Out of Bhakti issues Dharma. If Bhakti is extinguished, Dharma, even if it survives, soon tends to become hypocrisy, attached to worldly advantages. Dharma was not invented by men for utility as utilitarians imagined. It is Bhakti and Faith that gave birth to what is good as well as useful.

THE SIX ORTHODOX WAYS OF WORSHIP

By

Late POLAGAM SRI RAMA SASTRIGAL

The description of the Head of the Sri Kamakoti Pitha at Kanchi, contained in the usual gracious communications (Srimukhas) of His Holiness proclaims that Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada bore the honorofic title of *Shanmata pratishtapakacharya*, he who established the six forms of worship. These forms of worship are Saiva, Vaishnava, Sakta, Saura, Ganapatya and Kaumara. These are known as devotional forms of worship (*bhaktidarsanas*). They are called *darsanas* as they are all means for the attainment of Jnana (Knowledge):

शैवं च वैष्णवं शाक्तं सौरं वैनायकं तथा ।
स्कान्दं च भक्तिमार्गस्य दर्शनानि षडेव हि ॥

Thus has said Sri Vidyaranya in the *Puranasara* and *Parasara Madhaviya*.

These six systems of worship are pure orthodox systems, because Sri Bhagavatpada who established them was himself an orthodox person and a protagonist of the Vedas. Brahmananda Bharati classifies the followers of the various forms of worship leading to liberation as under in *adhyaya* I, *amsa* 1 of his ancient work *Purushartha Prabodha*: 1. Suddha Vaidika, 2. Tantrik Vaidika, 3. Suddha Tantrika, 4. Vaidika Tantrika. (The Tantras prescribe various modes of worship and these may in some respects differ from the prescription of the Vedas. But the Vedas and Tantras are not to be taken to be mutually antagonistic. One who follows the Vedas (Vaidik) may take in certain elements of the Tantras and *vice versa*). The Vaidika who is in some way connected with Tantra is the Tantra Vaidika and he who is bereft of that connection is the Suddha Vaidika (Pure follower of Vedas). The Tantrika who has no connection with the Vedas is Suddha Tantrika and the Tantrika in whose scheme Veda is a part in Vaidika Tantrika. Of these the Bhagavatpada comes under the class of Suddha Vaidikas—*i.e.*, he was essentially an upholder of the Vedic mode of worship.

The aforesaid six forms of worship are Suddha Vaidika. Hence there is no mutual contradiction among them. It is well known that for this reason the followers of each of these modes of worshipping a particular deity as the Supreme include the other Gods (also) with the particular Divinity that they worship every day. The orthodox regulate their daily life, according to a text of *Parasara Smriti*, by the Karmas of Sandhya worship, ceremonial bath, meditation, oblation in the sacrificial fire, worship of the Gods, hospitality and oblations to all creatures.

संध्या स्नानं जपो होमो देवतानां च पूजनम् ।
आतिथ्यं वैश्वदेवं च षट् कर्माणि दिने दिने ॥

Worship of the Divinity is one among them. This worship generally takes the form of *panchayatana puja*, worship of the symbols of the five Divinities. These Divinities are the Sun, the Mother Goddess Ambika (Sakti or Devi), Vishnu, Ganapati and Siva (Mahesvara.

आदित्यमम्बिकां विष्णुं गणनाथं महेश्वरम् ।
पञ्चयज्ञपरो नित्यं गृहस्थः पञ्च पूजयेत् ॥

"Panchayatana" means the location of the symbols of these five Gods before the worshipper.

There is a rule as to where the symbol of a particular Divinity should be placed in this worship. The important Divinity is placed in the Centre and the rest are placed in the corner directions around the central Divinity, beginning with north-east. What is the important Divinity is determined by the worshipper's devotional inclination arising from his Karmas in past lives, and the tradition of his family. The Saiva who is a devotee of Siva, the Vaishnava who is a devotee of Vishnu, the Sakta who worships Sakti and others too similarly should place in the Centre the symbol of the Divinity of their choice and worship accordingly. That men are classified as belonging to one of the six sub-faiths does not mean that there is any difference among the Gods themselves. It is to drive home this truth, a worshipper offers prayers to the other forms in addition to his favoured one in the *panchayatana puja*.

In the *Siva panchayatana puja* of the Saivas, Siva (*i.e.* Siva's symbol : the *bana linga*), is placed in the Centre, Vishnu is placed in the North-East, Surya in the South-East, Ganapati in the South-West and the Devi in the North-West.

The order in the *Vishnu panchayatana* of the Vaishnavas is as follows : Vishnu in the Centre and clockwise in the corner directions beginning with North-East are placed Siva, Ganapati, Surya and Devi.

In the *Saura panchayatana* of the Sauras it is as follows : Surya in the Centre and the others in the order of Siva, Ganapati, Vishnu and Devi starting with the North-East.

The Sakta who worships Sakti places the Devi in the Centre and Vishnu, Siva, Ganapati and Surya all round in the aforesaid order.

The Ganapatya places Ganapati in the Centre and the rest all round in the following order : Vishnu, Siva, Surya and Devi.

This order of location is enunciated in the *Nirnayasindhu*.

शंभौ मध्यगते हरीनहरभूदेव्यो, हरौ शङ्करे-
भास्येनागसुताः, रवौ हरगणेशाजाम्बिकाः
स्थापिताः ।
देव्यां विष्णुहरेभवक्त्ररवयो, लम्बोदरेऽजेश्वरे-
नाम्बाश्शङ्करभागतोऽतिसुखदा व्यत्यासतो
हानिदाः ॥

(शङ्करभागत here means the North-East, sacred to Siva and therefore called Isaanya).

Taking each one of the Divinities worshipped in this *panchayatana puja* as the Prime One arose the five forms of worship (or *matas* as they are called) namely Saiva, Vaishnava, Sakta, Ganapatya and Saura.

But a question may arise. Why is Skanda or Kumara who is one of the Six Divinities mentioned in the beginning as presiding over each of the Shan-matas not worshipped here ? It is only *panchayatana* (worship of the five) and not *shadayatana* (worship of the six). If Skanda worship is not included in this scheme, how can the Bhagavatpada be called *Shanmata-sthapana-charya* ?

The reply is : It is well known that the orthodox forms of worship are sixfold. It is equally well known that Sri Bhagavatapada is *Shanmatasthapanacharya* and that apart from the faith of Skanda there is no sixth form of worship. Skanda worship is celebrated in the *Skanda Purana* and is very popular among devotees. Kalidasa was a great Skanda-bhakta. Sri Bhagavatpada has sung in praise of Skanda in his *Subrahmanya Bhujanga Stotra*. So, the *Skanda mata* or *Kaumaram* must be included in the *Shanmatas*. Some worshippers include a symbol of Nagaraja (Serpent King) in the *panchayatana puja* and worship it. This practice shows that Skanda or Kaumara is one of the Shan-matas, because Skanda is always identified with the Serpent—or the coiled power of the soul called *Kundalini*.

Then, where are we to place the symbol of Skanda among the rest in the *panchayatana* worship ? Siva is generally worshipped in association with Uma and Skanda as Somaskanda, as the very name signifies. So, it would appear that Skanda should be placed between Siva and Uma. It is seen that Skanda is located between Siva and Devi in temples. So, in the *panchayatana* also Skanda may be accommodated between

their symbols. Either an image of Skanda, or in its place a symbol like the Spear (Sakti or Vel) may be placed. Some worshippers actually do so.

Skanda may be placed in the *Siva panchayatana* between Siva in the Centre and Devi in the North-West—he may be placed by the side of Devi ; in the *Vishnu panchayatana* between Siva in North-East and Devi in North-West *i.e.*, in the North ; in the *Surya panchayatana* the same as in the *Vishnu panchayatana.* In the *Sakti panchayatana* Skanda may be placed between Devi in the Centre and Siva in the South-East. In the *Ganapati panchayatana* Skanda's place will be near Devi. It will not matter that in this last arrangement Ganapati himself comes between Siva and Devi and *ipso facto* between Siva and Skanda, as Ganapati is none other than Skanda's elder brother.

It is not necessary, that because of the inclusion of Skanda the mode of worship be called *Shad-ayatana.* Skanda need not be totally distinguished from Ganapati and the form of puja may still be called *panchayatana.* In the work-a-day world too children (and Skanda is but a 'child'=Kumara) are not separately counted.

Skanda *bhaktas* who wish to worship Him as the Central Deity by this scheme of arranging the other Divinities around may locate Him in Ganapati's place in the *Ganapati panchayatana,* which incidentally is the sacred Centre between Siva and Sakti. Ganapati will have His place near Siva, just as Skanda has his place near Devi in *Ganapati panchayatana.*This accommodation of Skanda in the *panchayatana* fortifies our contention that there is no opposition among the Divinities in the scheme of worship.

While speaking about *Siva Puja,* Bodhayana speaks invariably about *Skanda puja* too. In the *Grihya Sutras,* Apastamba speaks of oblations (*balis*) of cooked food. Of these *Isaanabali* is one. He prescribes two opposite positions, south and north, to Isaana and His wife *Midushi.* He locates therein Isaana, His Devi and their attendants. Between the two positions he locates Skanda known as Jayanta and says that He should be worshipped with offerings of *argya, padya, achamaniya* etc. This shows that the Maharishis approved of worshipping Skanda in Siva Puja and the location of Skanda is between Siva and Sakti. So all the six divinities are worshipped every day in the daily devotional practices of the orthodox.

आदित्यस्य सदा पूजां तिलकस्वामिनस्तथा ।
महागणपतेश्चैव कुर्वन् सिद्धिमवाप्नुयात् ॥

says Yagnavalkya in his Smriti. 'Tilakaswami' here means Skanda who is fond of the fragrant mark in the forehead, Tilaka.

Another thing must be noted here. In the *panchayatana puja,* the divinities face east and the worshipper sits facing the north. This is the usual practice. It is in accordance with this that the locations of the divinities have been determined. Sometimes and in some places it may be necessary that the divinities have to be made to face north or south, the worshipper sitting in front of them. What positions should the divinities occupy then ? The *Smriti* says :

पूज्यपूजकयोर्मध्यं प्राची प्रोक्ता विचक्षणैः ।
प्राच्येव प्राची सोद्दिष्टा मुक्त्वा वै देवपूजनम् ॥

In the matter of devotional worship the middle between the worshipper and the worshipped should be considered the east. In other matters the natural East must be considered as such. The determination of the other directions must be made accordingly. The worshipper must invariably avoid facing south.

We shall now proceed to show that the six Suddha Vaidika forms of worship are contained within two. In the six forms detailed above, Devi is the consort of Siva and Ganapati and Skanda are His sons. They are connected with Siva and hence the Sakta, Ganapatya and Skanda matas may be subsumed under Saiva. Vishnu mata alone is separate. Surya (Sun-God) is included among the Jivas and does not find a place among the Divinities that are worshipped. It is true that the *Antaradityavidya* prescribes that the Divinity imbedded in Surya is to be worshipped by Himself. Yet, there are two texts namely :

ध्येयस्सदा सवितृमण्डलमध्यवर्ती नारायणः ।
सौरमण्डलमध्यस्थं साम्बम ।

According to these, Narayana in the former case or Siva in the latter is to be worshipped as the power inhering in Surya. In association with Vishnu we have the name 'Suryanarayana', in association with Siva the name 'Siva-adityamisra'. So Surya *mata* (Faith) is included either in the Vishnu or Siva *mata.* Hence, it follows that the Suddha Vaidika matas are, in practice two only, Vaishnava and Saiva.

People generally talk of two Gods only.

एको देवः केशवो वा शिवो वा ।

God is one, call him Kesava or Siva.

हरेरिदं हारं, हरस्येदं हारं, हारं च हारं च हारे,
अग्रयोर्हारे यस्य सः अग्रहारः ।

What pertains to Hara (Siva) is *haaram* ; what pertains to Hari (Vishnu) is also *haaram*. *Haaram* and *haaram* are *hare*. Hari's temple is called *haaram*. Hara's temple also is called *haaram*. So a *haaram* each propitiated to Siva and Vishnu in the two ends of a village make what is called an *agrahaaram*.

Considered this way too, there are only two principal Divinities and these two kinds of temples are generally seen everywhere.

These two forms are not opposed to each other. Hence temples for them both were erected in every village and to this day people offer worship in both. But among the worshippers, those who put on Vibhuti have come to be affiliated with *Siva mata* and those who wear the Gopichandana with *Vishnumata*, according to documents of yore.

Thus we have shown that the pure orthodox forms of worship are two. We shall now proceed to establish that in fact even these two are really one. Kalidasa says that God is one only, not two:

एकैश्वर्ये स्थितोऽपि प्रणतबहुफले यः स्वयं कृत्तिवासाः ।

Thus Hari and Hara being one, there is no difference or opposition between them. So it is asserted that ultimately our Faith or *mata* is one only. In Malabar, in the Vaidika form of worship, Siva and Vishnu are enshrined in the same temple.

Describing Rama bathing in the Godavari with Sita, Valmiki says (Aranyakanda, 16th sarga).

कृताभिषेकस्स रराज रामः
सीताद्वितीयस्सह लक्ष्मणेन ।
कृताभिषेको गिरिराजपुत्र्या
रुद्रस्सविष्णुर्भगवान्निवेशः ॥

Rama having bathed with Sita and Lakshmana looked like Siva having bathed with Sakti and Vishnu.

This sloka will make it appear that Vishnu is associated with Siva in Kailas and the devotees can have darsan of them as they are bathed together on the same seat. Hence it is clear that the Saiva and Vaishnava forms of worship are ultimately united as one.

In the aforesaid *sloka*, some substitute रुद्रस्सनन्दी for रुद्रस्सविष्णुः Sri Appayya prefers the latter in his *Ramayana tatparya sangraha*. The Suddha Vaidikas too are of the same view. The Tantrikas give a different reading. They criticise the other version as *abhutopama*, impossible example.

Sri Appayya Dikshita has written a work called *Ratnatraya Pariksha*. There are there diamonds churned by him out of the milky ocean of Srikantacharya's *Brahma Sutra Bhashya*. He has proved that these diamonds are Siva, Devi and Vishnu. That establishes the genuineness of the Ramayana reading रुद्रस्सविष्णुर्भगवान्निवेशः As there is no opposition between Siva and Vishnu, their juxtaposition will not be an impossible example.

All Aagamas were taught to Parvati (Sakti) by Paramesvara (Siva) in the presence of Vishnu: 'Aagama' is compounded of the letters *aa*, *ga* and *ma*. It emanated (*aagatam*) from Paramesvara's mouth. It reached out (*gatam*) to Parvati. It was accepted (*matam*) by Vishnu. Hence it was *aa*, *ga*, *ma*, i.e., 'aagama'. Vide the Aagama work '*Saradatilakam*' in which occurs the sloka:

आगतं शिववक्त्रात्तु गतं च गिरिजामुखे ।
मतं च वासुदेवेन तस्मादागम उच्यते ॥

Considering all this, it will be clear that worshipping Siva and Vishnu together is true Vaidika mata and that both matas are one only, not two.

The following sloka shows this identity:

ध्येयं वदन्ति शिवमेव हि केचिदन्ये
शक्तिंगणेशमपरे तु दिवाकरं वै ।
रूपैस्तु तैरपि विभासि यतस्त्वमेव
तस्मात् त्वमेव शरणं मम शंखपाणे ॥

Saying that Vaidika mata is one only is in consonance with *Advaita siddhanta*. *Advaita Vedanta* says that Brahman is unitary, one only, but that it assumes different forms, like Hari and Hara and becomes the God of worship. This means that, there is no opposition between the different ways of worship as their common goal is the path of wisdom (*jnana marga*). This has been accepted by Kalidasa and other great poets. Sri Bhagavatpada too firmly established this ancient way of worship. Hence the *suddha vaidika mata* of the *Advaitin*, which has been declared by those who know as not contradicting anything.

THE RELIGION OF THE WORLD

By

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There are ever so many religions in this world. Each has a separate name of its own to distinguish it from the others. All these names are personal and are derived from the founders of the respective faiths. Thus Buddhism takes its name from its founder, Lord Buddha, Jainism from Jina, Muhammadanism from its prophet, Muhammad, Christianity from Jesus Christ, Zoroastrianism (the religion of the Parsees) from its founder Zoroaster, and the Chinese religion, Confucianism, from its propounder, Confucius. No doubt all these founders of new religions have been great men possessing the power to attract many men to their way of thinking. Thus every religion other than ours has a distinctive name of its own. But if you ask a youngster belonging to our religion what religion he professes, he would, if he happens to have received a little English education, at once reply that he belongs to the Hindu Religion. On the other hand if we ask our peasants about the name of our religion, they would be at a loss to give a common name to it. If we put the same query to those employed in writing negotiable documents in the South of India, they would describe themselves as they do at the top of these documents, as belonging to the Saivite or the Vaishnavite cult. These are really subdivisions in our faith and cannot be taken as representing the whole of it; but even these names are not derived from those of any historic personages but merely follow the names of the respective divine forms selected for personal worship. If Hinduism is really the name of our religion, it should have been known and described as such even during the period of our remote forefathers. But it would appear that to our ancestors of even a few centuries back, the name 'Hinduism' would have been a strange and meaningless term. It is so because ours is a religion without a name.

No doubt the subdivisions in our faith go by certain specific names. These again take their names only after the various forms of the one Almighty selected for *upasana* and not after human beings. For the general faith however it would be difficult to find a common name. Of late a name has been much in use, viz., Sanatana Dharma, but even this cannot be said to be the strictly traditional name of our religion, for in that case it should be known as such to the poor peasant and to the humble widow, as in the case of the followers of other man-made religions. But such is not the case.

The term Hinduism is really a name somebody has presented us with. We can find in History a clue as to how this term came to be coined. Our forefathers were once the inhabitants of the region watered by the river Sindhu (the modern Indus) which, to some foreigners who came into contact with us was known as Indus. From this they christened the land in which this river flowed as the Indu Desa or 'the land of the Indus'. Naturally and in course of time they applied this name

to the entire Bharatavarsha of which the part watered by Sindhu formed but a slice. Are we not familiar with the saying that 'beyond Hyde Park all is desert'?

Again, every religion has some distinguishing symbol which at once marks it off from the others. The Cross of the Christians is one such example. The Hindus on the other hand, have no apparent symbol to point to as being common to all of them. As we are without a name, even so we are without a common symbolising badge. Ours, therefore, appears to be a religion without a name and a distinguishing mark! For instance, some of us wear the sacred ash, while others wear the "Vishnupad" on their foreheads. Some among us are "Vira Vaishnavas" and an equal number, the "Lingayats" and similar others are "Vira Saivas". All these, however, have the consciousness that they are the adherents of one common religion.

The real grandeur of our faith consists in its being nameless. The need for names for an article arises only when there are many of that type so that each could, in some way, be distinguished from the others. But if there is one and one only of that article, why need a name for it? To take a concrete instance, if there are, say, four Ramasvamis in a village we must give them different initials or personal names to tell the one from the other or otherwise distinguish between them by calling one of them, Ramasvami, the dark, another of them, Ramasvami, the fair, and so forth. If there be only one Ramasvami, there is hardly any further naming required.

Even so, with our religion. What is religion? It is that which shows us the way out of this miserable cycle of births and deaths or in other words sins and sorrows. It was pointed out at the outset that other religions are known by the names of their respective founders. These religions therefore did not exist before the rise of these great personages. Specific dates are assigned to every such religion. It naturally follows that ours is a religion which existed before all these other faiths were born. Thus it should have existed at a time when it was the only religion in the world, administering to the spiritual needs of humanity as a whole. This then explains our religion not having had a specific original name, as there was no second religion from which this name should distinguish it. It was merely the Dharma—a word synonymous with Religion.

It would appear then that its having no specific name is itself a distinctive symbol. Although the religion has no distinguishing name of its own there is in it a common basis—viz., the faith in the final authority of the Vedas, i.e., *Veda Pramanyam*, in spiritual matters. This is also implied in the saying current in some of our mother-tongues that makes the Vedas a simile for authoritativeness!

The question then arises that, if ours was the only religion prevalent at the time, were our religious principles observed by all the inhabitants of the world? We can now give plenty of instances to show that the reply to this question is in the affirmative.

For instance, one of the charges against Jesus which made the Jews crucify him was that Jesus drank water from a well intended for the lower classes. Does this not imply the existence of a caste system before Jesu's time?

Again an inscription unearthed in Egypt, dated 1280 B.C. contains the terms of a treaty between Rameses II and the Hittites. In this treaty the vedic deity, "*Maitravaruna*," has curiously enough been cited as the witness! (*See* H. R. Hall's "Ancient History of the Near East" —pp. 364 *et seq.*) Besides, in the ancient Egyptian Chronology, we find a series of kings bearing the name of Rama as for example, Rameses I, Rameses II, Rameses III, etc.

In the island of Madagasgar off the Eastern coast of South Africa, as many as seventy-five per cent of the names of places happen to be Samskrit names. Most of them are akin to the name of the hero of the *Ramayana*, Rama.

We are all aware of the Great Sahara Desert in Northern Africa. There is a theory that all deserts once formed the beds of the seas or, in Samskrit, Sagaras.

Is the suggestion far-fetched, that the modern name, Sahara, is a corruption of the Samskrit "Sagara"? It is said that while the Sahara was under water there was a thick population around its banks and that the names of those people were mostly Samskrit and were even related to the name of Rama. (*See* Encyclopaedia Brittannica, Vol. XXIII, Title—Sahara.)

Evidences such as these are not wanting in the opposite part of the Globe. In distant Mexico a festival is being celebrated at about the same time as the Indian "Navaratri" or "Dusserah" and it is known as "*Ramasita.*" (*See* p. 56 of the Text and Plate 24 in T.W.F. Gann's *The Maya Indians of Southern Yucaton, North and British Honduras.*) Further, the excavations made in that country have resulted in an abundance of the idols of Lord Ganesa being unearthed (Baron Humboldt quoted in Har Bilas Sarda's *Hindu Superiority,* p. 151). The ancient inhabitants of those parts were "Astikas" (i.e., those who believed in *Veda Pramanyam* or the authoritativeness of the Vedas) a term which still lingers in the modern name "Aztecs" which is now given to this group!

In Peru, a country in the West of South America, the inhabitants were sun worshippers. Their principal festivals of the year fell on the solstices. (*See* Asiatic Researches, Vol. I, p. 426.) They were known as the "*Incas,*" a name derived from one of the names of the Sun, "*Ina.*"

While speculating in this strain, it is tempting to make another observation on the remarkable similarity between a series of names of places in California and several *puranic* names. We have all heard of the well-known story of the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara being burnt to ashes by the sage Kapila, to save whose souls their descendant Bhagirata, is said to have brought down the Ganga to the earth. The story goes that the horse sought for by the sons of Sagara was found in the netherlands (*Patala Loka*). America being roughly India's antipodes on the globe, is this description of that land in the Puranas as the netherland to be laughted at? Is it not very suggestive that *California* might be a corruption for "*Kapila Aranya*" (Kapila's forest), and that the two islands nearby, viz., "*The Horse Island*" and "*The Ash Island,*" might represent the places where the horse of King Sagara was kept and where King Sagara's sixty thousand sons were burnt to ashes?

Figs. 128 and 129 in page 621 of *The Native Tribes of Central Australia,* by Spencer and Gillen (Macmillan, 1899) depict a kind of dance said to be current among the wild native tribes of Australia. This dance is described in the book as *The Siva Dance.* On closer examination, the dancers appear to have painted on their forehead a third eye, a fact suggestive of the possibility that the people of even such distant lands as Australia were once well-versed in Vedic lore.

Nearer home in the Eastern Archipelago evidences of the prevalance of the Hindu Faith are abundant. Java bristles with relics of Hindu cult and worship. In Borneo there is a forest which the Westerners were for a long time describing as a virgin forest, i.e., not having been penetrated by man (Wallace—*The Malay Archipelago,* pp. 44-45). A party of explorers, after they had gone a few hundreds of miles, discovered a stone which contained an inscription commemorating in detail the performance of some specified *Yagas* and *Yajnas* (Vedic sacrifices) by a certain king (Yupa inscriptions of Mulavarman of Koeti, Borneo).

All these evidences only go to prove that our religion which was the only religion the world possessed for a long time, had spread all over the world.

It will not be out of place to examine here some conceptions of Hinduism about the Universe. The common Hindu belief about our terrestrial globe is that it is composed of seven *Dvipas* or land masses. Adi Sankara Bhagavadpadacharya refers to this in the following sentence in one of his books: *Sapta Dvipa cha Medinee.*

Each one of these *Dvipas* consists of several *Varshas* each of which in turn consists of several *Khandas.* Our country India has been described in our scriptures as *Bharata Khanda,* said to be a part

of *Bharata Varsha*, which in turn is supposed to be situated in *Jambudvipa*. Mount *Meru* is supposed to be to the north of all the seven *Dvipas*. There is an ocean belt between every two *Dvipas*. The sun and the moon are said to move round *Meru*.

Let us now examine in detail the real import of these conceptions. The Westerners teach us in our geography books that the earth is round and we think that this truth was first revealed to us by them. The Samskrit term for "geography" is "*Bhu Gola*" which itself means "*the round earth*." Is not the very existence of this word proof of the fact that our ancients were aware of this fundamental geographical truth about the spherical nature of the Earth? In the ancient Indian mathematical science, words such as "*Khagola*" and "*Bhu Gola*" occur which are further evidences in support of the above. In our *Sankalpa Mantras* we use the word "*Brahmanda*" while referring to the earth. The term *anda* in this word really means an egg, i.e., an oval-shaped body!

Let us now imagine the whole earth as a lime fruit with that part of it containing "*Meru*" (Himalayas) directed towards the north as its apex. Then "*Meru*" becomes the north pole and, hence, the northern most point on the earth. This position, then, will sufficiently explain the saying: *Sarveshamapi Varshanam Meruruttaratah Sthitah*. The rest of the sphere is all to the south of it. To the eye of a man standing on the apex of it, the sun and the moon would appear to go round it, i.e., the sun would not be exactly overhead at any part of the year, but would always be to a side of it. This is what is meant by the statement in our *Sastras* that the sun goes round "*Meru*." There is thus nothing in these conceptions which could be considered as being contradicted by modern geographical discoveries.

All the modern discoveries about the geography of our earth seem, therefore, to have already dawned on our ancient seers. References to these truths are also found in the works of Aryabhatta, Varahamihira, and Appayya Dikshita.

Thus we come back to the truth which we established at the outset, viz., ours was the only religion extant on the face of the earth for a long time. All the other religions of the world have only taken up and developed some phases of our bigger faith which contains all the aspects of the different religions.

With a little propaganda characterized more by kindness and love than by conceit and arrogance, it might yet be possible for us to convince others of this truth.

—From a discourse in 1931

RELIGIOUS HARMONY

By

K. BALASUBRAHMANYA AIYAR

In October last year, the foundation stone was laid for the erection of a Temple of Understanding in Washington, U.S.A. On that occasion, a Conference was also held of the representatives of the chief religions of the world in which the necessity for the followers of these religions for understanding one another's faiths and for living in harmony was emphasized by the speakers. There reference was also made to the Parliament of Religions that was held at Chicago in 1893 for a similar purpose and to the visit of Swami Vivekananda and his work in that Parliament. Soon after that, a similar conference was held in Calcutta of the representatives of the various religions of the world and eloquent expression was given to the same necessity for understanding and harmony. In the Christian World also, a similar idea was entertained both by Pope John and by Pope Paul for an understanding between the different sects of Christians.

In India we have people who are followers of all the religions of the World. Even Zoroastrianism is represented by the Parsi community in Bombay. It has followers nowhere else in the World. So, religious harmony is a prime necessity in our motherland if our democracy should be successful. From time immemorial the Hindu religion was the main faith of the people of this country. Owing to the vicissitudes of our history, the Sanatana Dharma which had its source and authority in the Vedas got subdivided into many sects. In addition to this, the dissenting religions of Jainism and Buddhism had also the effect of creating further divisions among the people. Though, at one time, on account of the masterful personality of Buddha and his glorious renunciation, Buddhism was prevalent for a few centuries, its influence also declined gradually on account of the fact that Buddhism ignored the authority of the Veda. Further, many sects of Buddhism and other religions arose in the country. But fortunately for us, the great Sankara appeared on the scene and ceaselessly worked for understanding and harmony between these conflicting sects by restoring in the minds of men respect for the word of the Veda and preaching the message of the unity of one God though called by various names, and the fundamental unity in all systems of thought by expounding brilliantly the great philosophy of Advaita. This philosophy being all-comprehensive is not inimical to any other school of thought. Tradition declares that there were as many as seventy-two sects with whom he had to contend in the course of his trimphal tours (*digvijaya*) from Amarnath to Kanyakumari.

For a number of centuries afterwards, Sanatana Dharma as expounded by Sri Sankara was accepted by the people of Bharatavarsha. It was only in the 11th and the 12th centuries that schisms arose again among our people. After the Muslim conquest and the advent of the European Powers—particularly the British—Islam and Christianity spread by the vigorous proselytisation of the adherents of those faiths. In consequence, India now presents a picture of a congeries of all the religions of the world. Religious understanding and harmony have become an imperative need. Fortunately for us,

Providence has always extended its concern for the welfare of our people by bestowing the presence of saints and great teachers from time to time during the course of these many centuries to work for religious harmony and understanding, through their message of love and devotion to God, irrespective of any creed, caste or community, such as the Nayanmars and the Alwars of Tamilnadu, the saints of Maharashtra and Mira Bai, Ramanand and Kabir of North India. The stream has not dried up and we had recently the great Ramakrishna Paramahamsa who taught and lived the unity of all religions and his illustrious disciple Swami Vivekananda who preached this message of unity to the people of the West and the East. Now in our midst we have the rare good fortune of being blessed with the presence of the Sage of Kanchi, Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kamakoti, who ever since he became the *Pitadhipati,* has been ceaselessly striving to promote religious understanding and harmony among all communities in our country.

In his time, the great Sankara brought about the unity of the various systems of worship among Hindus by establishing what is called the Shanmata, or six systems of worship, by the process of eliminating non-essentials and excrescences not consistent with Vedic tradition which have crept in due to the numerous cults which prevailed in the country before his time. Examples of these are the Kapalika and Bhairava cults and the Vamachara of the Saktas. He also cleansed some systems of worship prevalent in great religious centres by abolishing the practice of sacrifices for the propitiation of the deities inconsistent with Vedic tradition. He was also responsible for his followers adopting what is called the *Panchayatana Puja* in their daily worship, of worshipping the five icons representing Siva, Vishnu, Parasakti, Surya and Ganapati. He successfully brought about harmony among the various sects of Hinduism by establishing the truth that all these six systems of worship lead to the realization of the *one God,* who is called by various names. This principle may be extended to the modern days by conceiving that the one God is also called Allah or Christ.

After the attainment of Independence and the coming into force of the Constitution of India which has recognized the fundamental right of every citizen to profess and practise his religion and his system of worship, activity among the various religious sects has increased in the matter of vindicating and propagating the soundness of their religion and practice. Proselytisation also has acquired greater vigour and conversions are taking place in large numbers especially by the Christians. Among the Hindu sects also rivalries have come to the fore. Hence, there is greater need now than ever for a true understanding among the sects of Hinduism and among various religions for harmonious co-existence.

Among the several Hindu sects there are two important divisions, namely, Saiva and Vaishnava which have a long antiquity. Harmony between them is very important. His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti conceived the brilliant idea of having religious conferences during the month of December-January for singing and expounding the meaning of two classical hymns, one on Siva by saint Manikka Vachakar called *Tiruvembavai* and the other on Vishnu by saintess Andal called *Tiruppavai,* both beautiful and inspiring lyrics capable of elevating men's minds. He also added in those conferences the element of the exposition of the Vedangas which, as he said, constitute the inseparable link between the Saiva and the Vaishnava traditions. These conferences have been held in various places in South India for nearly twenty years now. They are attended by large numbers of people. This has brought about a very healthy atmosphere between the two communities. His Holiness has also stressed the need for the revival of Vedic learning which is the source and authority for all our Hindu sects. He perceived that Vedic learning had gone down very much during recent years, and so, started a movement for the revival of Vedic schools (Patasalas) existing in the country which are languishing for want of help and support. He has also made a vigorous effort to revive the interest in the study of the 'agamas' of the Saiva, Vaishnava and Sakta schools which chiefly govern the worship in the

great temples dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Devi. To develop piety among the common people, he has organized a movement for the revival of folk songs and fork-lore current in various parts of India and South-East Asia where Hindu colonization flourished in the past, and has arranged for their exposition and demonstration in annual conferences held for that purpose, called the Vyasa-Bharata-Agama-Silpa-Sadas. All these activities have for their chief object the promotion of understanding and amity among the various sects of our country and the realization of the fundamental unity of our culture. Representatives from Nepal, Tibet, Assam, Thailand and the Island of Bali have also been attending these conferences and exhibiting their folk dances, etc.

To promote the same objective, His Holiness has now sponsored the idea of holding a Shanmata Conference of the followers of the six systems of Hindu worship prevalent in our country, to understand the significance of each of these systems and perceive their common goal of seeking and securing the grace of the one God called by various names: Vishnu, Siva, Sakti, Surya, Ganapati and Kumara. Sri Adi Sankara has composed beautiful hymns in praise of all these six deities. Reading and singing of these hymns will go a long way to promote understanding among these sects. For, Sri Sankara has sung the praises of these deities without any trace of partiality or discrimination and has even adopted in them the ideas and words peculiar to the respective systems.

Each system of worship regards its deity as the Supreme One and the others as next to it. Sankara has adopted the same approach in these hymns. This will fully satisfy the respective devotees of these deities, while at the same time it renders a spirit of tolerance and goodwill towards the other systems of worship. It is this spirit that is most desired at the present day. While the Saiva may be an ardent devotee of Siva, it is not at all necessary for him to entertain any hatred or contempt for Vishnu or His devotees, nor need the devotee of Vishnu have any illwill or contempt for Siva and the Saivas. To some extent a spirit of compromise is also necessary in the matter of some of the theological concepts such as including Siva among the *jivakotis* by the Vaishnavites, or Vishnu not being recognized as a God by the Virasaivas. Intolerance in this respect will surely hinder the prospects of mutual understanding.

It has also to be borne in mind that during the past few centuries there has grown a sizeable polemical literature about the respective superiorities of Siva or Vishnu or Sakti. This has to some extent disfigured the image of our country. Such an approach has to be ignored entirely in the context of the present times when we are striving for mutual harmony. People have also indulged in condemning the religious practices of these sects. This also has to be avoided completely. In these various ways something like a revolution has to be effected in the minds of men and of Hindus particularly. As Swami Vivekananda felt, it is this country that is destined to establish lasting harmony among all religions and sects. Every one of us should strive to contribute his humble mite to the great effort which the Sage of Kanchi is making for the establishment of harmony and peace in this world for which humanity is yearning so eagerly. Let me conclude with the prayer:

यं शैवाः समुपासते शिव इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तिनः
बौद्धा बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपटवः कर्तेति नैयायिकाः ।
अर्हन्नित्यथ जैनशासनरताः कर्मेति मीमांसकाः
(and may I add
क्रैस्ट् इति किरस्तवाः अल्लेति मुहम्मदीया.)
सोऽयं वा विदधातु वाञ्छितफलं त्रैलोक्य नाथो हरिः ॥

He whom the Saivas worship as Siva, the Vedantins as the Absolute, the Buddhists as the Buddha, the logicians, great demonstrators, as the Creator, those attached to the teachings of Jina as the Arhat and the ritualists as Sacrifice —(and may I add, the Christians as Christ and Muslims as Allah), may that Hari, the Lord of the three Worlds, give you the desired fruit!

TEMPLE WORSHIP

By

H.H. Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

Our country abounds in *punya kshetras* (holy temples) and *punya teerthas* (holy bathing places). The temples and *teerthas* are places where sages of old had dedicated their *tapas* (spiritual powers) so that erring mortals, who are incapable of observing the austerities necessary to gain spiritual powers and who are susceptible to sins, may be purified and blessed, when they make pilgrimage to these temples and take their bath in the *teerthas*.

Our sculpture, music, dance, *mantras* and every aspect of our culture are dedicated to the God in the temple and so the temple has become the repository of all that is best in our heritage.

We have our history also from the inscriptions in the temples. The monarchs of those days, great devotees as they were, took pride in raising temples for God and not residential palaces for themselves—as proved by the fact that while their palaces are now either dilapidated or not at all to be found, the grand temple edifices stand in glory to this day.

If our religion has survived many vicissitudes in the past, it is because of our temples and the festivals associated with them.

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Gratitude for help received is a cardinal virtue. The taxes you pay to the Corporation of Madras and to the Government are your expression of gratitude for the services rendered by those agencies. There are superhuman agencies which confer benefits on us. We mush express our gratitude to those agencies in the manner prescribed in the Vedas. This expression of gratitude is known as *yajna* (sacrifice). Temple worship is just another form of *yajna,* where offerings are made to the super-human agencies on behalf of the entire community. While in the *yajna* the various forces are individually propitiated as *devas,* in the temples the Source of all these forces is worshipped with offerings, which naturally go to all the *devas.* Though schools, hospitals and banks and such other social service organizations may be necessary in the context of our present times, these institutions cannot serve their respective purposes in the absence of devotion. The one cure for all human ills is the power to endure them with faith in God's grace. *Bhakti* alone can give that power of endurance. Temples are the agencies for the cultivation of *bhakti.* Hence the obligation to maintain or build anew temples in every place.

What is the significance of making offerings to the idols installed in temples? This is done as an expression of gratitude to the Power that created all things. We will be guilty of gross ingratitude if we do not offer first to God, what we eat or wear. It is not every one that can do *pooja* (worship) at home and make these offerings to God. It is here that temples come into the picture. Offerings are made to God in the temples on behalf of the entire community.

It is not even necessary that every one should worship inside the temples every day. Gopura *darsanam* (seeing the tower of the temple) will itself elevate our minds and make us remember the source from which we derive all the earthly benefits. At the same time, it is necessary for the community to see that worship at the temples is conducted properly. We should make it a point to see the temple tower every day and thereby concentrate a while in the contemplation of God. At least once a week we should go round the temple, reciting *naamaas* (God's names) and doing *bhajan*. If we do so, we will derive real and lasting benefit.

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The five sense organs, namely, eyes, ears, nose, tongue and touch, give us an awareness of the fundamental elements, which, in diverse combinations, constitute the universe. Like a receiving radio set, these organs receive the various impulses from outside and carry them to our brain. That is why they are called the *jnaanendriyas*. Each of the five senses contributes to our joy in life. Good food, delectable music, fragrant smell, beautiful art, cool breeze, and soothing moonlight add to our joy and happiness. All these good things in life come to us through God's grace, for, by ourselves, we cannot produce even a grain of rice. That being so, it behoves us to think of Him from whom they emanate, the God whose aspects are the divinities presiding over the elements, which determine the senses and their respective sensations. It is our duty to gratefully offer all those things which afford us the right kind of joy to God, the Giver, first, and then enjoy them as His *prasaada* or gift. According to the *Gita*, if we enjoy these things without offering them first to the Giver, it would be tantamount to theft. It is this offering of the objects of the five-fold joys that is known as *Panchopachaaras* to God, the five offerings, namely the offering of *gandha* (sandal), *pushpa* (flowers), *dhoopa* (incense), *deepa* (lamps) and *naivedya* (food). If our *jnaanendriyas* and their stimuli are reverentially offered to the Paramatma, then we shall not be inclined to misuse these sense organs. By such dedication to God, we deflect them from evil propensities and sublimate them to a divine goal.

Besides requirements which are the minimum sources of material pleasure, there are other things which make for life's comfort, like house, clothes, conveyance, etc. These too are to be used only after they have been offered to God. All such offerings are included in, what is known as, *Shodasopachaaraas* (16 offerings). And then there are other sources of enjoyment like music, dance, chariot, elephant, horse, etc., applicable in the case of highly-placed persons and which may be regarded as luxuries for the common man. All these should also be offered to God before being appropriated for use by us, and they are included in the 64 or *Chatus-shashti upachaaraas*.

All these *upachaaras* come within the ambit of the rituals of worship. It may be asked, "Why all these elaborate rituals? Will not silent prayer do?" The answer is to be found, if we rightly understand the significance of these ritualistic offerings, namely, that a true devotee acknowledges the ultimate source and the inner substance of these objects of his enjoyment and uses them only after tendering them to that source in humble gratitude. Since only the best and the purest should be offered to God, and since nothing should be enjoyed which is not so offered, this practice will ensure that every man will seek and take delight only in such things as can be fit objects of such offering. This will go a long way in making our lives perfect and pure.

God is the source of all the pleasures that we enjoy in this world and they reside in Him in their excellence and perfection. He will vouchsafe them to us, warding off our afflictions, if we would but resign ourselves absolutely at His holy feet. It is in this consciousness of deriving our joys and pleasures from Him, that we offer various things to Him in our *panchopachaaras*.

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There is a *sthalapurana* (mythological account) for each temple. The Saivite and the Vaishnavite saints have also sung about many of our temples and places of

pilgrimage. This temple literature contains a fund of information which, when understood properly, will help us to approach the *Puranas* with the reverence they deserve.

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In this country, there are, what may be called, community temples. In fact all the temples help promote community-consciousness by bringing together people of all walks and stations of life in the holy bond of devotion. Especially the great festivals bring together people from far and near. In the Car Festival, rich and poor alike, Brahmin and peasant alike, draw the rope of the car. It is a rule that no pollution should be observed for the proximity of the out-caste in the Car Festival. Such is the bond of devotion!

Apart from this there are, what may be called regular community temples. For instance, at Avudayarkoil, it is the custom to offer large quantities of cooked rice to the presiding deity and this rice is made available to all at a nominal cost. In many temples the sense of community life is fostered by devoting special days and occasions for it. Consecrated food is made available through them to all those in need.

There is some special feature associated with the worship in each temple. For instance, the special feature of Tirumalai is the offering of wealth, which takes the form of dropping cash or jewels in the hundi. In Palani, people carry and offer *kaavadi*. At Rameswaram, the bathing of the deity with water brought from the Ganga is considered sacred. In the West Coast, each temple has its special form of offering. At Ambalapuzha, the offering to Sri Krishna takes the form of *paal paayasam* (a sweet preparation with milk and rice). The favourite offering to Sri Mahadeva at Vaikom is the conduct of feasts, at which hundreds of people are fed sumptuously. During the annual festival at another Sri Krishna temple, boat races are conducted in the water course is front of the temple. At Tirupparayar, where the presiding deity is Sri Ramachandra, offerings take the form of detonation—a number of cylinders, packed with gun-powder, are set fire to and they explode one after another in quick succession with a loud report. At Ettumanur, money is offered, as is being done at Tirumalai. At Trichur, ghee offered by devotees is poured over the deity, with the result that the Deity remains practically hidden under the solidified ghee. The accumulated ghee within the *sanctum sanctorum* is removed periodically, and this ghee, often a hundred years old, is purchased by Ayurvedic physicians, as *puraana ghritam* (old ghee) is a specific medicine for skin diseases. It is at this temple that the parents of Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada prayed and obtained the blessings of the Lord for getting a son.

Another sacred and historic temple in Kerala is that of Lord Sri Krishna at Guruvayur. The Lord enshrined in this temple is popularly called Guruvayurappan and He is pleased to hear the recital of Srimad Bhagavata. This temple and the temple of Sri Ayyappan on the top of the Sabari Hills have become popular in Tamil Nad also during recent years. It is noteworthy that Sri Sankara, in his *Siva paadaadi-kesastavam*, has also prayed to Sasta or Ayyappan, referring to Him as the third son of Lord Siva.

In some temples, the quantity of *naivedyam* (offerings) is in such generous proportion that a devotee can get sumptuous food by paying merely an anna. The Annapurnesvari temple in Cherukunnam (Kerala) will be closed every day only after ascertaining that no one has gone without food. There is a custom there to tie a bundle of cooked rice to the branch of a tree near the temple in the night. This practice is to ensure that even a thief does not go hungry.

* * *

The lesson that we have to draw from all these forms of worship is that we should do our duty and enjoy the right things of the world, placing the entire responsibility for our not being lured by them, on God. This is not a philosophy of inaction or idleness. It is a philosophy of action, with the emphasis on the dedication of our action and enjoyments to God.

—*Culled from His Holiness's lectures*

EVOLUTION OF THE INDIAN TEMPLE

By

T. N. Ramachandran

Indian Temple Architecture has an individuality of its own, one of rare aesthetic sense, combining skill and beauty with durability and utility. It opens a simple yet delightful way into the timeless domain of the Indian spirit. If India is hailed as a "land of wonders" it is because of her vast number of temples, rock-cut and structural. In view of the fragile nature of the material, ordinary residential habitations of ancient India having perished in course of time, we have only the temples to go by to recapture the glory of ancient Indian architecture. It was indeed a blessing in disguise that the ancient Indian, however averse he might have been to record his own private life, was enthusiastic to record, with the permanence that he was capable of, his spiritual or ritualistic experiences. Such were his care to revere the dead and his zeal to propitiate his tutelary gods either by way of *homa* or *puja*. In *homa* he offers libations of ghee, twigs, flour, etc., into fire so that whatever he offers is irretrievably lost and all that accrues to him by such acts is spiritual or ritualistic gratification. *Puja* is the other method in which he decorates his favourite God with flowers, jewellery, dress, etc. While in the Vedic and the Proto-historic Indus culture there is an emphasis more on *homa* than on *puja*—terracotta cakes called *kapalas* of definite ritualistic importance in sacrifices having been found at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro—in the historic period there is an emphasis on the *puja* form and this brings in a large number of temples, rock-cut and structural, for which Historic India is famous. The structural class is grouped under three main heads or styles of architecture. These groups are the rectangular or *Nagara* (Metropolitan), the round and the apsidal or *Vesara*, and the octagonal or *Dravida*. An alternative grouping mentions six styles and is based on geographical rather than architectural considerations. These six styles relate to the three mentioned above and to three more called *Sarvadesika* or universal, *Kalinga*, and *Varata*. More than geography it was religion that served as the environment and the background to the temples of India. Religion is the very frame-work of life; that which inspires Indian Art and Architecture. A peculiar human trait in India is that "Humanity is steeped in Divinity and by whatever name he worships Him each man sees God, hears God, is a part of God and lives in God every minute of his life; even the humblest are not cut off." This is pure and simple religion as understood by the designers of the Indian temples.

Proto-historic India

Just as in Egypt big temples were raised about the same time as small shrines, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa of 3rd millennium B.C. also appear to have had large temples as has been described by Wheeler in the *Cambridge History of India*, 1953, p. 39, in regard to a temple revealed at Mohenjo-Daro. Wheeler says: "It is massively built but of relatively small size; it is approached in monumental fashion

by two symmetrical stairways, a provision quite out of scale with any domestic or industrial purpose; the stairways are themselves reached through an impressive double entrance at the lower level and within the entrance is a small circular enclosure apparently designed for the protection of a tree or other object—possibly even of the statue whereof the head was found only a few feet away; and finally, amongst the rare sculptures of Mohenjo-Daro, a second was broken in the same vicinity, and its major part was found actually on the site of the present building. The combination of circumstances, though not determinative, inclines towards the identification of the structure as a temple, and it can at least be said that here, more amply than anywhere else at present in Mohenjo-Daro, the conditions for such identification are supplied."

The Mohenjo-Daro temple of Wheeler by its very form would appear to be a variant architectural essaying of the Vedic "*Chandas-chiti*-altar" orientation which would assume a pyramidal shape with circular or square plan, relating respectively to the Zigguret or the pyramidal temple order. The side entrances mentioned in the Mohenjo-Daro temple linger on in the Buddhist *stupa* entrance as in the Amaravati *stupa* and the myriads of pillars in the rock-scooping like the Karle Chaitya-hall are apparently the successors to the *sahasrasthuna* prayer halls of the Vedic hymns. The Rig Vedic hymns talk about the thousand-pillared and other shrine-structures of the gods indicated by words like *mana* or *vimana* which is *sahasrasthuna* and a *Sadas* (prayer-hall) which is *sahasra-sthuna* and *sahasra-dwara.* Soma is often assigned in *Rig Veda* the role of a King (*Somarajah: eshava Bharata raja Somo asmakam Brahmananam raja*—Y. V., 1-8-10) being brought to the Sacrificial Hall with regal pomp. Mitra and Varuna are described as kings invoked or seated in a vast comprehensive or pervasive edifice (*mana*) or hall (*sadas*) with 1,000 pillars or 1,000 domes. This is sufficient evidence to show that Vedic culture was certainly aware of great temples in the sense in which we find temples in Historic India. That there were images and temples in Vedic India or Vedic culture is denied only by those who do not know how much of the *yaga* ritual is inter-twined with that of the purely temple (*agamic*) ritual and by those who assign *yaga* and *yoga* and *agama* and *tantra* to different cultures. Indeed one of the seals from Harappa shows a replica of a Vedic shrine.

That structural exhibition in the shape of architecture arose from the Vedic Indian's ambition to record his ritualistic and religious life is borne out by the evidence of fire altars (*chiti*) and sacrificial structural necessities noticed in the Indus Valley and recorded in the Vedas.

Temples are also recorded in Vedic literature. Such are *Riks* from *Rig Veda*, as V, 62, 6-7:

Rajana kshatramahrniyamana Sahasrasthunam bibhrthah Saha dvau ||

"Ye twain Mitra-Varuna! together of cooperative spirit, uphold dominion here (in this structure) of 1,000 pillars."

VIII, 88, 5: *Brhantam manam Varuna svadhavah Sahasradvaram jagamagrihante* ||

"Food bestowing Varuna! may I repair to thy vast, comprehensive thousand-doored dwelling."

II, 41, 5: *Rajana vanabhidruha dhruve Sadasyuttame* | *Sahasrasthuna asate* ||

"Oh Mitra-Varuna! both kings, who are ever friendly (never clash), are seated in this building or prayer-hall which has 1,000 pillars and firm foundations."

The Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro of burnt-bricks is a sacrificial structure probably meant for the *avabhritha* bath of the royal sacrificer of Asvamedha and allied sacrifices. The bath 39′ long, 23′ broad, and depth 8′ is large and access to it is at either end by means of a staircase. A wide pathway on the top of the bath rested on cells filled with clay. There was a cloistered walk around the bath. There were eight bath rooms to the north of the Great Bath which were provided with stairways probably leading to an upper storey. The existence of such an

elaborate bath in the contiguity of the river Indus makes us think of *Avabhritha.*

Vedic India

Vedic India had a golden age of its own indeed. Worship, as one can glean from Vedic hymns, was complicated and endless, though exalted and refined. Associated as it were with a well-defined and regulated ritual, the archaeologist finds to his surprise that it never became collective. The many sacrificial worships (*kratu, cayana* and *yaga*) described in the Vedas are meant for the exclusive benefit of the performer, the *Yajamana,* who was concerned with his sacrifices (*yagas*) and *agnihotra* or daily fire-worship of three fires (*tretagni*). He had left some *yupa* pillars and *cayana*-bricks only; the former being of wood have perished and the latter weathered or disappeared in the absence of any associative stable structures.

The *Sulba-sutras* give an elaborate account of Vedic architecture and geometry in regard to fire altars and sacrificial orientations known to the *Vedic Yajamanas.* Such are *chitis* and *chityas.*

We have in the manner of the various *chitis* many architectural manifestations in brick of the ritualistic experiences of the Vedists. Also are described in the Vedas and archaeological vestiges have been recovered of them as such, the three fires worshipped by the Vedists, one in the shape of a circle (*garhapatya*), another in the shape of a square (*ahavaniya*) and the third in the shape of a semi-circle (*dakshinagni*). Enclosures (*Vedi*), convex, concave and cubical, seats and pedestals and rails are also described. On a few seals at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa are depicted the square and circular fires. From one of the circular fires, issues Agni in an anthropomorphic form within an aureole of pipal twigs while the *yajamana* is in the foreground performing the sacrifice to the accompaniment of songs sung by seven reciters (*hotaras*). The *Drona* among the *chitis* has led to the apsidal *chaityas* of Buddhist India. The *Rathachakra* form of *Chiti* as well as the circular shape of *Garhapatya* fire has developed into the circular Buddhist stupas. *Chhandas-Chiti* has developed into pyramidal and crucie-form structures as at Paharpur, Luriya Nandangarh and Borobudur in Java.

The circular form of the *Rathachakra chiti* as well as the shape of *Garhapatya* or sacrificial primordial fire as we saw in the case of Vedic *chitis* is what we notice even in pre-Vedic India.

Megaliths

The religion of pre-historic India was one that concerned itself mostly with megaliths and can best be understood by a careful and comparative study of the cairns, dolmens, stone circles, menhirs, cists, sarcophagi and cromlechs spread over India. These relate to the prehistoric man's reverence for the dead and the methods adopted by him for the disposal of the dead. One has but to look at the megalithic umbrella-stones of Cochin and the Bhubaneshwar temple of Lingaraja of the 11th century A.D. to be convinced about the origin and development of the Indian temple and the designs in the mind of the builders through the ages.

Historic India

The Indian temple is only a reflection of the physical form of a man. The creation of the Indian temple was the result of man's urge to express himself. In theological terminology this urge is defined as man's thirst to give expression to himself, or to speak correctly to his divine self.

The material with which the temple can be built—rock, stone, stucco, marble or metal—will correspond to the important material of the human form, namely, the skeleton, the bone, etc. Architecture is the flesh, shape and the form of the human body. Sculpture, imagery and figural paraphernalia which decorate the temple correspond to the human anatomy, physical beauty, jewellery and dress of a person. And lastly, temple paintings, fresco, tempera or mural which we find on the walls, ceilings, and pillars of the Indian temples as in Sittannavasal, Tanjore, Ajanta, etc., compare with the complexion, hue and beauty of the human form.

The temple is the abode of God. Even as in the case of the human body endowed as above, one has to search for the imper-

ceptible soul concealed in it, the God or the presiding deity whose abode is no doubt within the interior of the temple, is not readily cognizable. All that a visitor to the temple derives is spectacular gratification (*sahridayananda*) while only a select few visualize the God. Obviously, to get over this want, great temple-builders of ancient India have fitted into great temples, scenes drawn from the divine deeds of Gods called *Leelas*.

Jainism

Having discussed the problems of the temple and the religions of Vedic and Protohistoric India, we come now to the same problems in Jain India. A revolution in the sphere of religion was necessary to develop religious monuments and link up the history of the temple. Such a revolution took place towards the 6th century B.C., in the Gangetic valley, between the River Ganges and the Himalayas. Lord Mahavira and Lord Buddha were two of the many teachers who spread in India a gospel of liberation (*Moksha*) based on reason and freedom from rituals, thus paving the way for a religious renaissance. The advent of these world teachers synchronized with a mighty political revolution that shook the whole of India, a revolution that replaced clans by States, and prepared the way for an Empire transcending the States. Mahavira, the 24th and the last *Tirthankara,* founded an ascetic order or brotherhood, governed by a system of rules, standing on the sheet-rock of the sublime doctrine of absolute sanctity of life, called *Ahimsa.*

Jainism attempts to raise man to godhood and to inspire him to reach it by steady faith, right perception, perfect knowledge and a spotless life. Jainism believes in godhood and speaks of innumerable gods. While saints and scholars ennobled the religion, the Jain merchants vied with one another in erecting temples, some of which are the best specimens of religious architecture in India. For the best in Jain temples we should turn to the places where the *Tirthankaras* were born and attained *nirvana,* e.g., Ayodhya, Sravasti, Kausambi, Varanasi, Hastinapur, Mathura, Rajagriha, Mt. Parswanath, Mt. Girnar and Pavapuri. Rajagriha in the Patna district has been an important archaeological centre, with many small temples built on almost all its hills. Pavapuri, the place of Mahavira's *nirvana* and Nalanda, Kollage and Balaka which were places of Mahavira's early activities are all situated near Rajagriha.

The Lomas Risi cave in the Barabar hills, Bihar, is one among the many chapels or religious dwellings for the Ajivikas excavated in the hardest rock, with the entrance carved in imitation of wooden forms and the inside exquisitely finished and polished like glass. The form of the Lomas Risi cave, which is Mauryan, is evidently that of contemporary structural buildings in indigenous style. While structural edifices—*stupas,* chapels, and monasteries—were being erected in Hindusthan, the Buddhists and Jains of Western and Eastern India were engaged in fashioning more permanent monuments of the same class by hewing them from the living rock as seen in the excavation of the dwelling places and chapels for the Ajivika ascetics in the Barabar hills of Bihar. These artificial caves of the Mauryan period were of very modest proportions and were at first kept severely plain, or, like their Iranian prototypes, adorned on the outer facade only. As time went on the Indian excavators became ambitious and began to copy their structural *chaitya*-halls and monasteries (*viharas*) and imitate their details which speak more for their industry and patience than for the originality of their genius. So literal, indeed, was the translation of the wooden architecture into the new and more durable material, that infinite toil was expended in perpetuating forms which became meaningless and inappropriate when applied to stone.

Devotional architecture, which had its beginnings in the rock-cut temples at Barabar in Bihar and Khandagiri-Udayagiri caves of the 2nd century B.C. in Orissa found its fullest expression and development in many other later cave temples, such as the Indra-Sabha at Ellora, Sittannavasal and Tirumalai. Structural temples became the order of the day and to the Jains we owe the erec-

tion of some which have become veritable dreams of beauty. Sacred places of pilgrimage or *Tirthas* were built on hill tops as in Girnar, Satrunjaya (Palitana) and Mt. Abu. These were "temple cities" or "temple-complexes" whose plan may not find favour with an architect. These "temple cities" were groups of religious buildings arranged on such level spaces as the contours of the hill could provide. Girnar, Mt. Abu, Satrunjaya (Palitana), etc., reveal an immensely rich architecture in marble and other precious materials but they lack the lyrical spirit which animated the architecture in stone. The Mt. Abu group like many other mediaevel masterpieces were the spontaneous expression of the entire Jain community, each member of the council, be he high or be he low, taking a personal interest in the construction. Khajuraho in Bundelkhand, the old Chandela capital, has a group of Jain (950-1050 A.D.) and Hindu temples which are second in importance and magnificence only to the Bhuvaneswar temples in Orissa.

Buddhism

The lyrical note, which was absent in Jain architecture found its fullest expression in Buddhist India. Lord Buddha, Mahavira's younger contemporary, spread his doctrine by bringing into motion the wheel of the law (*dharmachakrapravartana*). He stood on the pivot of love. Never before had any other human soul contemplated human suffering (the suffering that is inseparable from existence) with such pitiful yet unruffled sympathy. This sympathy or altruism was termed *karuna*. His gospel had a universal appeal. His *sutras* swayed the emotional masses who worshipped him as the Master and after him the saints, apostles, the varied Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The places sanctified by Buddha's association came to be worshipped. Among them were his birth place (Lumbini garden in Kapilavastu) and the places of his enlightenment (Buddha Gaya), first sermon (Sarnath near Banaras) and entry into *nirvana* (Kusinara). His relics (corporeal, associative and dedicatory) were enshrined and adored. Originally the shrines were raised over pieces of Buddha's bones. On these were planted symbols, such as the wheel of the law, a tree within altar, etc. The mounds were encircled by a railing. Gradually stone replaced wood and over the mound was raised a hemispherical dome (*anda*) which in turn supported a square pavilion (*harmika*) and on which stood the *chhatra*, the umbrella of sovereignty (*dharma-vijaya*). The Buddhist stupa in its classical form was thus created, of which the best examples are those in Sanchi (third-first century B.C.) in Bhopal, Bharhut (2nd century B.C.) in Central India, Amaravati (1st century A.D.) and Nagarjunakonda (3rd century A.D.) in South India. The Buddhist monks and nuns adopted, like their Master, an itinerant life and moved from place to place and from caves to rock-cut dwellings. The Buddhist church grew and merchants and royal visitors, foremost among whom was Emperor Asoka, endowed the Buddhist *sangha* and raised prayer halls or *chaityas* and monasteries or *viharas*. Caves were hollowed out, divided and decorated. Corporate life gave rise to the monastery and the monastery needed a temple or a chapel. Thus, in the cool and peaceful hill resorts of the Buddhist monks and nuns arose marvellous Buddhist cave-temples, prayer-halls and *viharas*, as at Karle, Kanheri, Bhaja, Nasik in Bombay State and Ajanta in Deccan. Painting and sculpture, which evoke today the artists' admiration were enlisted to depict the glory of the Buddha and the life of the Master, his past births (*jatakas*) and other edifying legends of moral value. In the north-west, owing to the Greek and Roman impact, a hybrid art developed and a complete Buddhist imagery, called Gandhara, was elaborated. Gradually, the orthodox Buddhist doctrine underwent a change. Popular beliefs, magic, and sorcery, collectively known as *tantras*, began to spread among the people and this and other factors tended to sweep off Buddhism from the land of its origin.

Hindu Temples

Under Hinduism we can group the many cults, which, though believing in a bewildering diversity of gods, have in common a theoretical recognition of the oneness of God, of the Vedas as the absolute autho-

rity and of an organization of society into castes—characteristics which have influenced the Hindu temple and its architecture. The Hindu temple expresses the individual character of the Vedic rites. The presiding deity or God dwells in it in human fashion, in an image or a symbol. The priest is an intermediary between the God and the devotee. He provides the God with the needs of daily life, pleases Him with *upacharas* (which are 16) and recitations of psalms, hymns and litanies (*mantras* and *dhyanas*), bathes Him, clothes Him, decks Him with flowers and jewellery, gets for Him from the world of devotees homage and offerings (*nivedana* and *bhoga*) and arranges for the God—whose agent he is—a calendar of endless festivals, fairs and processions (*utsavas*), which attract pilgrims from long distances. Hardwar, Rishikesh, Prayag (Allahabad) and Kasi in U.P., Bhuvanesvar, Konarak and Puri (in Orissa), Khajuraho (in M.P.), Kamakhya (in Assam), Tirupati, Kanchipuram, Kalahasti, Chidambaram, Tanjore, Srirangam, Madurai and Ramesvaram (in South India) are a few out of the many places of pilgrimage, where great temples were built with an eye on temple amenities such as huge bathing tanks, kitchens, rest-halls or *mandapas* and stables for elephants, horses, bulls, cars and *vahanas*.

The structural expansion of the temple, and of the South Indian temple in particular, followed a corresponding elaboration and expansion of the temple ritual. When the ceremonies and temple festivals (*utsavas*) were elaborated, there was a corresponding reaction on the arrangement of the building in which they were held. The main deity (*Mula-Vigraha*) of the temple, which is worshipped, has a spiritual as well as a temporal capacity and the increase in the temple structures was as in proportion to the powers or capacity associated with the God worshipped. In His spiritual capacity the God reigns supreme in the *sanctum sanctorum*, in the darkened mystery of a shrine called the *Garbha-griha* where He receives passively the worship of his devotees. For such a God of abstract spiritual potentiality, is provided the inner part of the temple, reserved and secluded as the sacred resort of the God. The temporal capacity of the God is manifest on certain occasions called *utsavas* and *pujas*, when the God issues from His retreat (from the *Mula-Vigraha* embodiment) and goes out in procession in a physical form called *Utsava-Vigraha*, not unlike the monarch of the land. When the God goes out in the procession taking part in festivals of a semi-mundane character, the temple precincts correspondingly expand. Thus the South Indian temple resolves itself into an inner, closed and sacred part, and an outer, open, public and less sanctified part. The inner part, generally rectangular, usually consists of two flat-roofed courts one within the other. The *sanctum sanctorum* (*garbha-griha*) lies in the innermost court and can be made out by its *vimana* which (usually richly gilt) may be seen projecting over the flat roof demonstrating clearly the focal centre of the temple-scheme. The outer part of the temple consists of a concentric series of courtyards enclosed within high walls (*prakaras*) and in these coutyards are located halls, pavilions (*mandapas*) and buildings connected with the secular aspect of the temple ceremonial.

Interestingly indeed the sequence of dynasties that ruled South India expanded the structural formation of the temple so as to suit the growth of temple ritual. While cave temples (cut-in and cut-out) were carved by the Pallava Kings in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., as at Mandagapathe and Mahabalipuram, structural temples with very high vimanas springing over the *sanctum-sanctorum* came up during the rule of the early Chola kings of Tanjore as at Tanjore (850 A.D. to 1070 A.D.). Huge *gopuras* or gateways such as at Tiruvannamalai and Chidambaram came up in the later Chola period (1070 to 1350 A.D.). Kalyana-mandapas and halls as in Kanchi and Vellore were erected under the Viaya-nagara kings (1350 to 1665 A.D.). And great corridors or corridor halls (*Pudu-mandapas*) such as in Madurai and Rameswaram temples which typify the latest style of temple development came up after 1600 A.D. If this dynastic evolution of temple-style is remembered against the background of an expansion of the temple ritual, which is in turn dependent on the

popular ascription to the God enshrined, of a spiritual unmanifested (*Avyakta*) capacity as opposed to a temporal or manifest (*Vyakta*) capacity, then and then only the design of any great South Indian temple, can be correctly appreciated.

Side by side with these structural temples which fall into one or the other of the six styles noted already the early traditional mode of rock-hewn shelters also continued. Like Jainism and Buddhism, Hinduism has innumerable cave-temples of its own. Those that take their place among the greatest works of art are the Elephanta caves (8th century) near Bombay, which were mistaken by the early European travellers to be monuments of Alexander and Porus, the Kailasa temple of Ellora (Deccan) of 8th century A.D., the famous *Rathas* of the 7th century A.D. and the Shore-temple of the 8th century A.D. at Mahabalipuram near Madras. Here, thanks to better tools, superior skill of architects and continued and spontaneous patronage of Royal artists, living rock was cut in or cut out, nay literally split to wring out of it shrines, columns, sculptures and images—in short a veritable wonderland, a heavenly retreat, a world of *Moksha*, where mortals associated momentarily with the celestial gods and goddesses and their glory rooted in their *lilas* and puranic stories and thus "far from man ran a godly race."

Hero-Stones and Burial Sites: Origin of the Temple

The origin of the Indian temple has been a matter of controversy, one theory attributing it to the burial sites and another theory tracing it to the hero-stones (*Virakkals*), etc. Sometimes there may be a stone in a village with quaint figures of an archer and cows; of a man fighting a tiger; or of a warrior on elephant or horseback fighting a rival. These stones called *Virakkals* sometimes contain inscriptions describing a hero who died fighting in a *Gograhana* (cattle-raid), a man who killed a tiger which was harassing villagers, a devotee fulfilling his vow by offering his head; or of a warrior killed in battle being gloriously transported by celestial nymphs to heaven. Sometimes the slab represents an upraised female hand with bracelets and the inscription would mention the act of *sati* committed by the woman on the funeral pyre of her husband. We have classical mediaeval examples of *sati* in the noble queen Yasomati of Prabhakaravardhana and in Vanavanmahadevi, the wife of Sundara-chola. Both of them were great queens, mothers respectively of the great emperors, Harsha and Rajaraja Chola I. And an inscription from the temple of Rajaraja I at Tanjore mentions the image set up by princess Kundavai for her mother, Vanavanmahadevi.

Sthalas and Sthalavrikshas

The Hindu temple like the Hindu religion has a long history. It would appear from literature that the worship of images in the open, under trees preceded the building of temples. Nature worship, with or without sacrifices and rituals in the open must have been going on for a long time. The Sangam poet Nakkirar enumerates places suitable for worship as nature's beauty-spots such as

காடுங் காவும் கவின்பெறு துருத்தியும்
யாறுங் குளனும் வேறுபல் வைப்புஞ்
சதுக்கமுஞ் சந்தியும் புதுப்பூங் கடம்பும்
மன்றமும் பொதியிலும், கந்துடை நிலையினும்
—**திருமுருகாற்றுப்படை**

"Forests, groves, rivershoals and lake-banks, street squares, junctions, flower gardens, village munds, public places and obelisks."

Sivalingas came to be worshipped under the trees and such trees were known as *sthala vrikshas*, e.g., Kadamba is the *sthala vriksha* of God Sundaresvara of Madurai. According to *Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam* there was a Sivalinga under a *Kadamba* tree in *Kadamba-vana* which Devendra saw and started worshipping. Thus the trees that gave shade to Sivalinga became shrines and vegetation and bushes around them became their walls, creeping snakes served as garlands, the roars of wild beasts resembled trumpet sounds, while the chirrupping of birds acted as music. That such places where devotees went and worshipped Siva produced terror is the picture we get by reading Saint Kannappa's life. Thus solitary Lingas in forests came to be

worshipped by people and to protect them from the sun and rain and spoliation by wild beasts, people built around them fences or rooms with the cut wood of the surrounding trees. Thus originally wooden huts were built around the Lingas and thus *garbha-grihas* came into appearance. Hence even now *garbha-grihas* are dark and small, their purpose being to protect the Linga. Temple architecture thus started with wood. Four wooden pillars supported a tent-like superstructure which came to be called the *Vimana*. But such wooden construction, though protecting the temples could not save them from forest fire or attacks by elephants. Hence these wooden temples came gradually to be replaced by brick temples. Temples of such materials can be noticed even today in Malabar. As people settled around temples they built them with bricks.

Appar and Temples

In 600 A.D. Saint Appar gives a picture of the temples in and before his times as follows:

பெருக்காறு சடைக்கணிந்த பெருமான்சேரும்
பெருங்கோயி லெழுபதினெட்டு மற்றும்
கரக்கோயில் கடிபொழில்சூழ் ஞாழற்கோயில்
கருப்பறியல் பொருப்பனைய கொகுடிக்கோயில்
இருக்கோதி மறையவர்கள் வழிபட் டேத்தும்
இளங்கோயில் மணிக்கோயில் ஆலக்கோயில்
திருக்கோயில் சிவனுறையுங் கோயில்சூழ்ந்து
தாழ்ந்திறைஞ்சத் தீவினைகள் தீரும்அன்றே.

Thus there appears to be eight kinds of temples in the days of Appar including

(1) *Madakkoyil* also called big temples or pavilions (pyramidal) which were constructed sufficiently high on the ground to prevent elephants from ascending. They were provided with steps. One such was discovered at *Mohenjo-Daro*.

(2) *Perunkoil* also called *Malaikkoyil* as they were erected on hills.

(3) *Karakkoyil*-shaped like cars (தேர்) with wheels.

(4) *Gnazharkoyil*, made of a special kind of wood called ஞாழல்.

(5) *Kokudikoyil* or temple surrounded by a special kind of jasmine creepers (முல்லை).

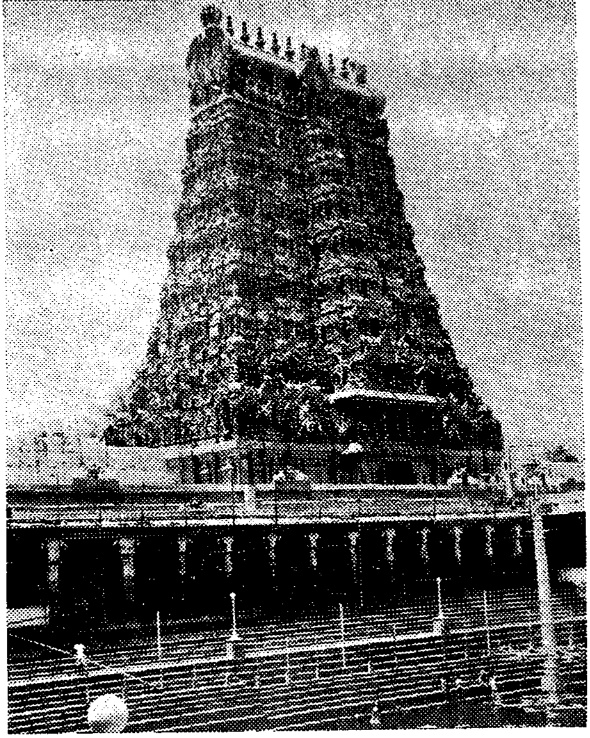
(6) *Ilankoyil* or *Balalayam*, which were small temples or model or miniature temples constructed for temporarily housing images during repairs to old temples. Examples from Mahabalipuram are known such as the Rathas and model in the panel of Arjuna's Penance.

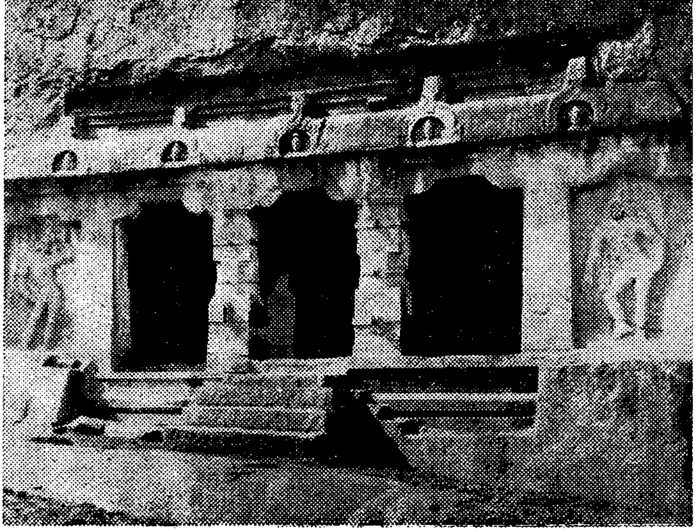
(7) *Manikkoyil* or beautiful temples provided with cupola-shaped or domed, bead-like *vimanas*, provided with *amalakas*.

(8) *Alakkoyil* or temples built under banyan trees, e.g., Alangudi, Alangadu, Vataranyam—names which denote the banyan tree (ஆலம்).

Pallavas, Cholas and Pandyas

But the Pallavas and the royal artist Mahendra Varman I who was a contemporary of Appar introduced cave temples to give permanence to them and was hailed as the father of Tamil Architecture. Narasimha Varman I *alias* Mamalla, son of Mahendra Varman, cut out rocks in 640 A.D. into what are called *rathas* today at Mahabalipuram. Pallava Rajasimha (700 A.D.) who built the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi and the Shore temple felt that instead of going to mountains and rocks and cutting them into temples, it would be better to build temples wherever we like by cutting the stones from mountains and taking them to places required. Thus structural temples came into existence. The Kailasanatha temple fulfils completely the needs of the modern temple by having *garbha-griha* with a *vimana* above it and a *maha-mandapa* in front and a *prakara* around it. From now onwards temples and *vimanas* acquire beautiful shape. In the history of Tamil Nad, though there was always war between Pallavas, Cholas and Pandyas, temples began to grow and develop. When the Cholas acquired power, the Brihadisvara temple at Tanjore built by Rajaraja I became (1000 A.D.) a representative edifice of the golden age of temple architecture. This was followed by the temple at Gangaikondacholapuram built by Rajendra Chola I in 1025. While the Cholas beautified the *vimanas* from bottom to top, the Pandyas devoted their attention to the other parts of the temple and concentrated their attention on *mandapas*, *prakaras* and *gopuras* or gateways. The pillars of *mandapas* also received the special attention of the Pandyas. "The Pandyan period is a period of transition between the affluent maturity of the Cholas, and the exquisite,



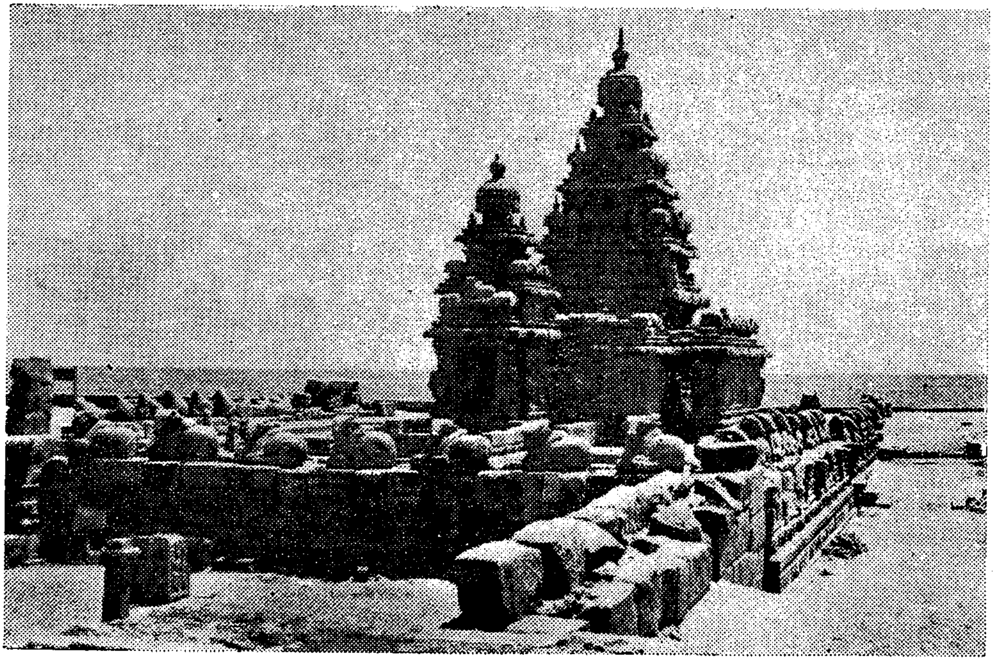


Top (*left*) Tower of Madurai temple

(*right*) Dalavanur (S. A.) cave-temple

Centre: Chaitya cave of Karle, Poona

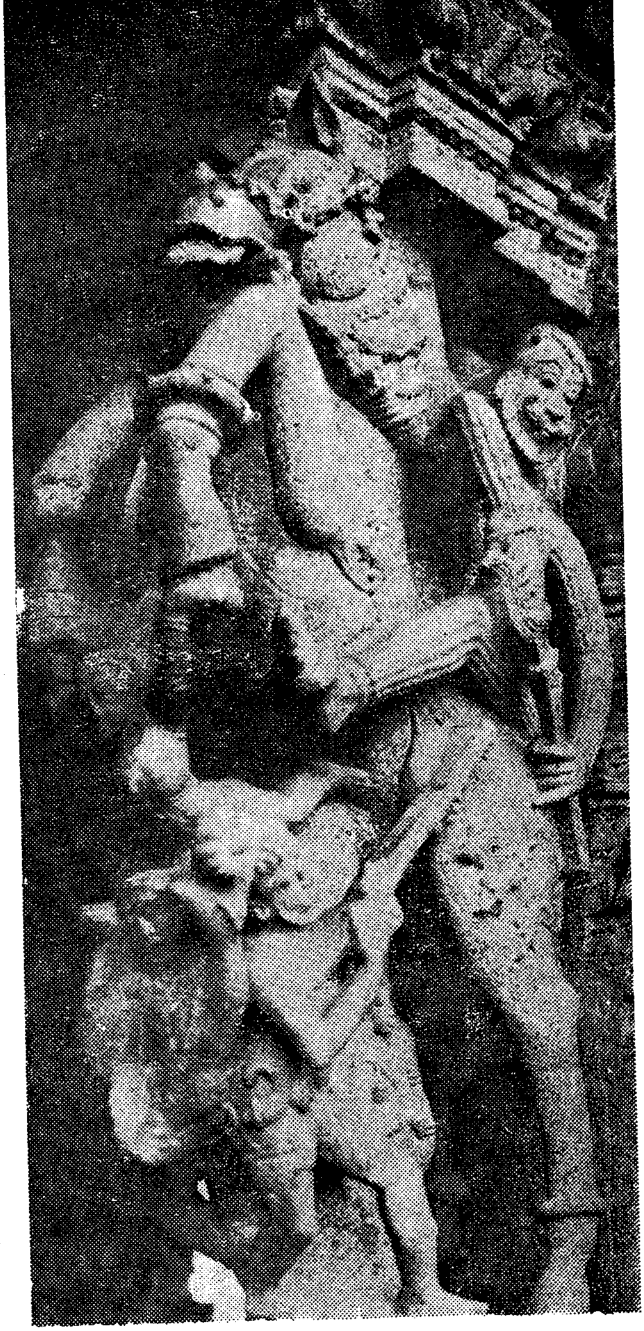
Bottom: Shore-temple at Mahabalipuram

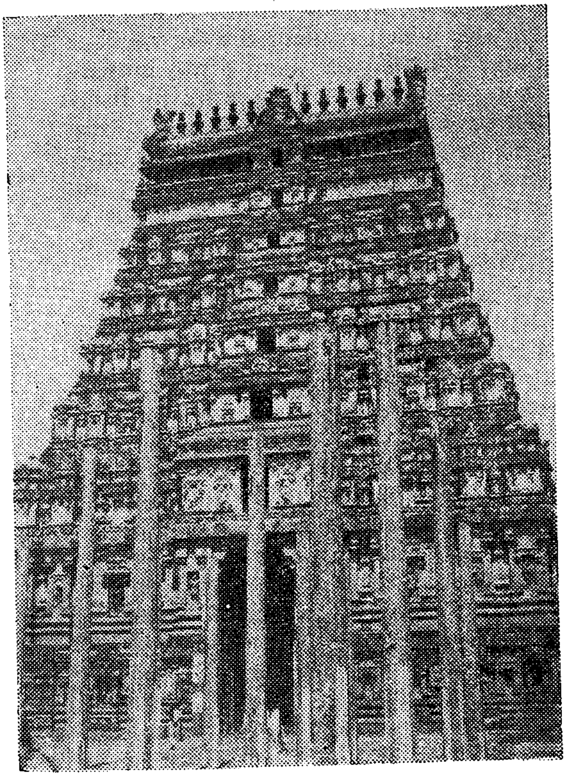


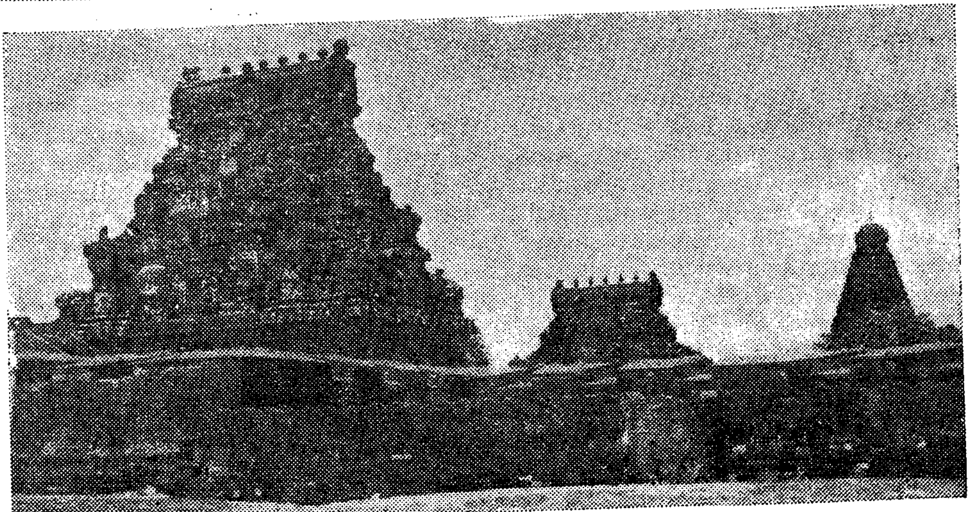
Top: A pillar in Kanchi Varada temple

Centre: Chidambaram Nataraja temple

Bottom: Brhadisvara temple at Tanjore







though extravagant, productions of Vijayanagar."

Vijayanagara Kings and Nayaks

After the Pandyas came the Vijayanagar kings between 1350 and 1600 A.D. Changes and additions in temples during the period arising from temple festivals, were the construction of *Kalyana mandapas*, shrines for Devi, *mandapas* of hundred pillars and thousand pillars, *Unjal mandapas, Vasanta mantapas,* etc. The Nayaks of Madurai and Tanjore perfected the work started by Vijayanagara kings, whose vassels they were to begin with. Subsequent to the Nayaks, we have the addition to South Indian temples of vast corridors called Pudu-mandapas such as at Madurai and Ramesvaram.

Conclusion—Temples as Cultural Centres

In India even villages have grand temples. Inscriptions found in the temples tell us that the temple as an institution was one of the greatest creations of the Indian genius. As the hub on which revolved society and the life of the village it was a centre of diverse activities ; it gave education to the scholar, provided amusement to the public, cultivated arts and the aesthetic sense of the dilettante and increased the devotion and piety of the worshippers. The role of duty and sense of responsibility of the committees that managed the temples as we gather from the endowments made to temples, was so clear-cut and firm that high character and scholarship were essential for those appointed on these committees. To ensure this, the temples provided for the conducting of classes in various sciences and systems of philosophy, grammar, rhetoric and religious hymns. An inscription of Rajendra Chola I from Ennayiram registers an endowment for the maintenance of a college for Vedic studies. We have in it a list of the various courses of study, the number of teachers and students for whose maintenance provision was made. A scheme of juvenile and adult education on very chaste lines for imparting right ideas of social life, conduct, morals (*dharma*), incorruptible ways, sound general knowledge of the affairs of the world, of institutions, political and social, and of general economics was all arranged by the king of the land through the exposition of special parts of the *Mahabharata*, the encyclopaedic national epic, which has shaped Indian thought and character through the ages. In many of the South Indian temples such as Tiruvorriyur, Tirumukkudal, Tribhuvani and Ennayiram recitation and exposition of the epics, *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* took place.

Another institution of popular religious instruction was through the recitation of the Vedas and Tamil hymns before the deities at stated times. The practice of chanting *Tiruppadigam* must have commenced as early as in the reign of the Pallava King Vijaya Nandi Vikrama Varman, as is evident from Tiruvallam inscription, which enumerates the reciters of the *Tiruppadigam* among the employees of the temple. It appears to have been systematised by Raja Raja I who was a great organizer of the practices and celebrations in the South Indian temples. An epigraph of Rajendra I mentions a 'Devaranayakan', apparently a Superintendent of *Devaram*.

Besides sacred literature, even subjects like Vyakarana (Grammar) and Astrology were taught.

Provision was made in the temples for morning and evening music, the pipers, drummers, flutists and others being given separate land allowances. An inscription mentions the arrangement for the play of the *Vina* in the temple. The *Natya-mandapa* in the temple was explicitly for the purpose of dance. Similarly, drama was fostered, and the *Ranga-mandapa* in the temple served as the open-air theatre and we learn from inscriptions of the drama, *Rajarajesvara Nataka,* enacted during the time of Rajendra Chola I in such a theatre.

The temple provided occupation for wood-carvers, sculptors, painters, gardeners, garland-makers, potters, watermen, cooks and accountants among others. The festivals conducted at periodic intervals attracted crowds from distant places and large fairs contributed to that healthy social intercourse which is a unifying bond between villages and districts.

In short, the Indian temples were not only places of worship, but the very focus of society. It may with truth be said that "they were fortresses, treasuries, court-houses, parks, fairs, exhibition-sheds, halls of learning and of pleasure, all in one",

MEDITATION AND HINDU ICONOGRAPHY

By

N. SRINIVASA RAO

In the Hindu metaphysical theories of aesthetic experience (Rasa) and rhythm (Dhvani) we find the contemplation of Beauty as unconditioned and Supra-sensual, inseparable from the experience of the unity of Brahman. The authoritative text *Sahityadarpana* defines aesthetic experience as follows: "Aesthetic experience is tasted by men who have an innate sense of absolute values; it is experienced in a state of pure consciousness as self-luminous, in the mood at once of ecstasy and pure consciousness. Such experience is dissociated from any contact with things knowable. It is a twin brother of the experience of unity of Brahman. It is indivisible and intrinsic and comes in a supermundane lightning flash."

Aesthetic delight is called the twin brother of Bliss (Brahmananda Sahodara). The realization of ideal Beauty or aesthetic experience cannot be distinguished in Hindu metaphysics from the realization of Being. The artist's apprehension of the world is the delight of Being in perceiving the unfoldment of the universe through Becoming. Being is the static Supreme Being and Becoming is its unfoldment or activity. We may call the one Purusha and the other Prakriti. It is in this connection the Gods and Goddesses are massed in supreme beauty and splendour helping the devotee to concentrate and meditate on their invisible form possessing divine attributes,

In the representation of different Gods, Hindu or Buddhist, the word *Dhyana* means the meditation of the devotee. The religious books contain prescription as to how one should try to form a mental picture of a God or when one should concentrate his attention in an unflinching manner. This concentration of attention or meditation forms the *sine qua non* of the worship of the Gods. The nature of the usual image is described in the scriptures. It is the duty of those that deal with plastic art to follow the description and to create plastic forms accordingly.

Each God stands as the plastic line or colour expression of a particular type of idea. It is the duty of the meditator to pass through the physical image of the represented deity to enter into the spiritual essence or idea for which he stands and which beams through his physical expression. The meditator must, in the end, bring himself into communion with the spiritual idea which the physical image is supposed to express. Through meditation the physical expression would gradually lose its physical character. It will be endowed with a transparency which cannot obstruct the passage of the mind in coming into union or communion with the spiritual idea underlying the plastic representation.

Indian art, emancipating itself from the camera mind and concentrated towards the inner reality and its universals rather than the external reality, concerned itself with a realm beyond visible natures. "Buddhist and Brahminical art in India

TRIMURTI OF ELEPHANTA

became the torch-bearer of social and spiritual values. Indian classical sculpture, painting and music gave a sense of unity and communion of life that spread from form to form in an all-encompassing and palpitating poised movement".

In Japanese Buddhist art, colours are related to different stages of contemplative ecstasy rising from the black through the blue, the yellow and the red to white, the pure and radiant source. Also colours are associated with east, west, north and south, with the seasons, musical notes, wood, fire, metal, earth, water, emotions, the senses and flavours—such traditions are probably of Indian origin. For in the *Vishnudharmottara* we find a definite prescription of the use of colours in painting according to religious symbolism. Colour symbolism in Indian art underlies Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic aspects which had to be painted white, red and dark; particular colours were selected for Rasa Chitras or pictures of emotions. Thus love was painted in syama hue, anger in red, pity in grey, fear in black and the supernatural in yellow colour. With regard to idols of the Gods, an image seated in meditative posture of Yogi is Sattvic, an image seated on the vehicle (Vahana) decked with ornaments and holding weapons or showing gestures of assurance or benediction is a Rajasic image; while an image in wrath and excitement in the pose of fighting or destroying demons in Tamasic. Such is the classification given in *Sukranitisara*. That the use of colour symbolism is derived from a metaphysical vision is indicated in *Bharata Natya Sastra*: "All is futile, the recital of Mantras, the counting of beads, austerities and devotion unless one has gained the knowledge of colours, the true significance of lettering, the hue and virtue of figures."

A Chinese writer on aesthetics Hsich Ho says that rhythm is the essential principle in nature and art. The essence of art is "operation or revolution or rhythm or reverberation of the spirit in the forms of life." It is through the operations of this spirit that the world movement or cosmic process is possible and motion is produced. The object of painting, then is to give expression to this 'Spirit' which underlies all manifestations or the phenomena of the universe. Painting thus reveals the essence and quiet movement of metaphysical reality. The goal of painting according to another Chinese writer, is the fusion of the spiritual and material. By communing with the spiritual, the artist acquires mysterious vigour and with the mechanical aid of colour and brush he gives a tangible expression to that spiritual inspiration. Rhythm or quiet plastic movement in both painting and sculpture in the numerous forms of fairies, angels and celestial beings appearing on temple towers reveal the rhythm of the spirit. These are depicted with singular felicity with the fundamental metaphysical notion that the entire universe is pervaded by an eternal stream of consciousness of which different forms and appearances are bubbles rhythmically appearing and disappearing.

The cosmic dance motifs reveal the march of the soul. The dance of Nataraja denotes the rhythm of creation, preservation, and destruction as revealed in the eternal moods of the human soul. The archetype of Nataraja in the posture of Tandava dance is found not merely in South India but also in other parts of the country including Bengal. In no art in world history are the metaphysical harmonics of Being revealed in such rhythmic and musical modelling, that is calculated to compose the mind and lead it towards complete renunciation of the flesh and the devil. The paraphernalia of the symbols aids the beholder in his meditation, but the total effect of experience in the image and of the image is the joy of rhythm; and renunciation and destruction include the final annulment of all symbols and concepts and even the image itself. The beholder ultimately finds as his meditation deepens that rhythm and rest, sound and silence are inseparable, alternate oscillations of his Being as of the Phenomena of the world of nature. It is thus aesthetic experience becomes an adjunct of spiritual ecstasy.

The life-size rock statue of Trimurti—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva busts welded into one—in the cave temples of Elephanta (near Bombay) may be taken as a symbol of man's realization of Becoming. It is considered to be one of the master-

pieces of world sculpture. It is a three-headed bust representing the categories of Being or alternating phases of soul's activity. The central head with its absolute serenity and inwardness, outspokenly translated into a firm exaggerated closing of the lips is the Being at rest or in the silence of meditation of Himself. The head in the right, loving and compassionate is the Being as Becoming, symbolizing the activity of creation. The head on the left which is grim and somewhat frowning is the Being as Transforming, symbolizing the activity of withdrawal or destruction. The dominating motif of the image is the oneness of the Self in its alternative pulsations of activity, withdrawal and repose that are apprehended as rhythms of cosmic process in the visible universe. The three aspects of Trimurti may also be considered as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva according to Hindu pantheon representing the three primordial accents or variations of the Supreme Cosmic Spirit or Being. The three different countenances of Being, representing different phases of mind, are magnificently daring in conception and the result is a profound repose and symmetry symbolizing at once the unity of self-consciousness in each of its original moods and the all-pervading Self in the cosmos. "Never have silence and activity, renewal and withdrawal in the soul's dialectically onward march ordered in such a perfect plastic harmony and rhythm. Never have the clarity and stillness of the human soul derived from complete identification with the realm of Becoming found such majestic expression in stone."

The image of Trimurti in Elephanta impressively and unequivocally utters the profound message of the Upanishads. "Activity is true worship when every act is done for the sake of Siva or Being; silence again is true worship when it is an absolute repose of meditation and call for man to choose the path of self-realization and peace."

—Courtesy: *The Divine Life Society*

THE DOCTRINE OF MAYA IN "BRAHMA-SUTRA"

By

MANDALIKA VENKATESVARA SASTRI

Sri Sankara's philosophy of Advaita involves the doctrine of *avidya* or *maya*. It is based on the *prasthanatraya*, the triple canon of the Vedanta, that is, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Brahma-sutra*. The distinguishing feature of this school is the doctrine that the material world is an illusion or more correctly, a mere *appearance*. It is, therefore, referred to as *maya vada*. The ultimate reality is termed Brahman which is impersonal and absolute consciousness. Owing to *avidya* (nescience) it appears as *Isvara* (Personal God), *jiva* (individual soul) and the world. The true nature of *Isvara* and *jiva* is Brahman. *Jiva* is to realize its identity with Brahman. To remain as Brahman is the ultimate goal, that is, liberation. And, this is possible only by overcoming *avidya*. *Avidya* has Brahman as its content (*vishaya*) and hence it could be removed only by the direct experience of Brahman. *Avidya* thus is the most important factor in *Advaita*.

This *avidya* is identical with *maya*. The Upanishadic texts 'know *maya* to be the material cause of the world and Brahman as its substratum'[1]; and 'The sages absorbed in meditation found the creative power of *maya* associated with the three strands of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*"[2] speak of *maya-avidya* as the primal cause of the world. The *Bhagavad gita* text, "Brahman, the pure conciousness, is veiled by *ajnana* and hence the Individual souls experience phenomenal existences"[3] states that *ajnana-avidya-maya* veils the true nature of Brahman.

The Upanishads speak of Brahman as attributeless and also as endowed with attributes. The Upanishadic texts such as "Brahman is not gross, not fine, not short... without sound, without forms"[4] etc., convey Brahman to be free from attribute and form. And the Upanishadic text 'He cherishes all (righteous) desires, contains all (pleasant) odours and is endowed with all taste'[5] conveys Brahman as endowed with attributes. The author of the *Brahma-sutra* points out that Brahman by itself cannot have these two contradictory characteristics as it is opposed to experience. Sri Sankara while commenting on this *sutra* observes[6]: "Of the two aspects of Brahman set forth in the *upanishadic* texts we have to accept that which is non-determinate *nirvisesha* as its true nature. The other aspect of Brahman is only superimposed on it by *avidya* and hence it is not real."

1. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, IV, 10.
2. *Ibid.*, I, 3.
3. *Bhagavad-Gita*, V, 15.
4. *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, III, viii, 8.
5. *Chandogya Upanishad*, III, xiv, 2.
6. *Brahma-sutra*, III, ii, 11.

Sri Sankara notices this distinction between two forms of Brahman, one which is without attributes and the other which is conceived with attributes. He says : " the upanishadic texts teach Brahman which is free from attributes in order that it may be realized, and they teach Brahman with attributes in order that it may be worshipped."[7] As has been stated above Brahman is viewed as endowed with attributes through *maya-avidya*.

It follows from the above that the concept of *maya-avidya* finds full expression in the Upanishads and in Sri Sankara's *bhashya* on the *Brahma-sutra*. There is, however, a general criticism that *maya-vada* is not advocated by Badayarana, the author of the *Brahma-sutra*. This criticism is unsound ; for the aphorisms of Badarayana only discuss the import of the Upanishadic texts. As *maya-vada* finds expression in the Upanishads, it finds expression in the *Brahma-sutra* also. We shall now deal with certain aphorisms of Badarayana wherein the concept of *maya-avidya* has been set forth. Sri Sankara prefaces his commentary on the *Brahma-sutra* with an exposition of the superimposition of the objective elements and their characteristic attributes on Brahman, and Brahman and its nature on the objective elements. Although the author of the *Brahma sutra* does not state the concept of superimposition so explicitly yet he should be taken to presume it. According to the *Brahma-sutra—atha' to brahmajijnasa* (I. i, 1), *jnana* or the direct experience of Brahman is the means to the attainment of liberation which is only the removal of bondage pertaining to *jiva* (individual soul). This bondage consists of the characteristics such as agency, finitude, etc. If, however, the bondage were real, *jnana* would not annihilate it, as it could remove only that which is not real. This suggests that bondage is not real, but only appears in *jiva* whose true nature is Brahman. There must be some cause for the appearance of bondage and that cause is *maya-avidya*. Thus in the first aphorism itself, the author of the *Brahma-sutra* indicates the concept of *maya-avidya*. He expressly states it in the aphorism—*tadguna-saratvat tadvyapadesah prajnavat*. (II, iii, 29).

The second aphorism *janmadyasya yatah* (I, i, 2) sets forth that Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. Its being the material cause of the universe, however, is not clearly expressed in the aphorism. But the aphorism—*prakrtischa pratijna drshtantanuparodhat* (I, iv, 23) affirms the material causality of Brahman in respect of the universe. Sri Sankara while commenting on this aphorism states: "Brahman is to be admitted as the material cause of the universe, as this view does not conflict with the statements setting forth the thesis and the illustrative instances. The statement putting forth the thesis is the following : 'Have you ever asked for that instruction by which that which is not heard becomes heard ; that which is not reflected on becomes reflected on ; that which is not known, known'. Now the knowledge of everything is possible only through the cognition of the material cause, since the effect is not different from the material cause. The illustrative example is : ' O gentle one : just as by one clod of clay all that is made of clay becomes known, the modifications being only a name arising from speech, while the truth is that it is just clay.' Similar statements putting forth the thesis and illustrative instances which are to be found in all Vedanta texts are to be viewed as proving that Brahman is the material cause of the world."

The point that is of profound importance here is that the thesis, namely, the knowledge of everything through the cognition of the material cause, that is, Brahman, would hold good only when we accept the world to be non-distinct from Brahman. And, this would be possible only when it is held that Brahman itself appears through *maya-avidya* as the universe. Badarayana, thus, makes express mention of the concept of *maya-avidya*.

In the same way, the aphorism—*atmani chaivam vichitrascha hi* (II, i, 28) sets forth the concept of *maya-avidya*. Sri Sankara while commenting on this aphorism says : "just as there is the manifold appearances of dream objects in the self while the latter does not undergo any change, so also the whole universe appears in Brahman without the latter undergoing any change ". It follows from this that Brahman appears as the world through *maya-avidya*.

Brahman is thus accepted as the material cause of the universe. It cannot be the transformative material cause ; for, if it is held that the whole of Brahman undergoes transformation, then Brahman as such would have ceased to exist after the universe issued forth,

7. Sri Sankara's Commentary on the *Brahma-sutra*, I, i, 12,

and therefore there is no point in the Upanishads declaring that one should realise Brahman. On the other hand, if it is said that a part of Brahman undergoes transformation, then Brahman endowed with parts would be non-eternal. Moreover, this admission would be in serious conflict with the Upanishadic teaching that Brahman is partless. Hence it must be held that Brahman is the transfigurative material cause. It *appears* as the universe; it does not transform itself into the universe. And, appearance would be possible only through *maya-avidya.*

It would be clear from the above analysis that the concept of *maya-avidya* has been advocated by the author of the *Brahma-sutra* and the criticism that the *maya-vada* is not acceptable to the author of the *Brahma-sutra* is, therefore, unsound.

THE CONCEPT OF BHAKTI IN ADVAITA

By

SRIMATI B. SITAMAHALAKSHMI

There is a general criticism that the fundamental metaphysical position of Advaita is such that it cannot accord any place to *bhakti* or loving devotion to God (*Isvara*) in its scheme of practical disciplines. According to Advaita, the ultimate reality is one without a second and is attributeless. It appears, owing to *avidya*, as *Isvara*, *Jiva*, and the world. The world is not real ; it is sublated by the direct experience of Brahman. Isvara is a complex of Brahman and *avidya*, and *jiva* is a complex of Brahman, *avidya* and its product—mind. Isvara is always aware of His identity with Brahman, and is, therefore, ever-released. *Jiva*, on the contrary, falsely identifies itself with mind-body complex, loses sight of its identity with Brahman, and undergoes transmigration. The realization of its identity with Brahman and remaining as Brahman is the ultimate goal, that is, liberation. And this is possible only by transcending *avidya*. *Avidya* has Brahman as its content (*vishaya*) and hence it could be removed only by the direct experience (*jnana*) of Brahman. The formulation by Sri Sankara of Advaita in a systematic form and in alliance with the doctrine of *avidya* has established the way of *jnana* as the sole means of liberation. On this ground it has been maintained by the critics of Advaita that *bhakti* towards *Isvara* is not necessary in Advaita. The critics of Advaita further contend that *bhakti* or loving devotion to *Isvara* is not only not necessary but also not possible in Advaita. According to Advaita, Brahman alone is real, and so there is no distinction of a God who rules and the world and *jivas* ruled by Him. The universe is neither one with nor different from Brahman. It is illusory. *Bhakti* involves a distinction between *jiva* and Isvara and in order that it may be practised the universe must be real. Advaitins contend that the difference between *jiva* and Isvara is only illusory, as both are in essence Brahman. And the universe also is illusory. Hence *bhakti* towards Isvara is not possible in Advaita. This, in brief, is what the critics of Advaita contend.

An elaborate discussion on the concept of *bhakti* beginning with Sri Sankara and culminating in Madhusudana Sarasvati's famous treatise *Bhaktirasayana* and his commentary *Goodhartha dipika* on Sri Sankara's *bhashya* on the *Bhagvadgita* proves that *bhakti* is not only possible but also necessary in Advaita. The conception of Isvara who is a complex of *nirguna* Brahman and *avidya* as the material and the efficient cause of the phenomenal world has been there in Advaita allowing room for devotion to Isvara by *jiva* who also is viewed as a complex of *nirguna* brahman and *avidya* and its product-mind. The world is illusory only from the stand-point of the ultimate reality. The author of the *Brahma sutra* who holds the *vivarta vada*, that is, the theory that the world is an appearance of Brahman and therefore illusory, advocates this theory from the stand point of the ultimate reality.[1] So long as the

1. *Brahma-sutra*, II, i, 14.

knowledge of Brahman has not arisen the entire complex of phenomenal existence is taken as true, even as the phantoms of a dream are taken as true until the sleeper awakes. It is from this stand-point that the author of the *Brahma-sutra* holds the *parinama-vada*, that is, the theory that the world is a transformation of Brahman[2]. The world is treated to be real. Isvara is considered to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. And the *jiva* is considered to be different from Isvara. The ordinary course of secular and religious activities including *bhakti* towards Isvara goes on undisturbed until the rise of the knowledge of Brahman. It follows from this that the Advaitic theory *does* allow room for *bhakti* towards Isvara.

All writers on Advaita usually begin their treatises with reverential salutations to Isvara, as devotion (*bhakti*) towards Isvara is the proximate means (*antaranga-sadhana*) of the intuitive knowledge of Brahman. It is with the view of attaining to the latter that *bhakti* towards God has been pursued by all the preceptors of Advaita.

Sri Sankara who maintains *nirguna* Brahman to be the ultimate reality and its knowledge to be the sole means of liberation is also the author of some of the most moving *stotras*, that is, hymns and praises, on various deities such as Siva, Vishnu, Devi, Ganesa, Subrahmanya which are only the manifestations of Brahman. His *Dakshinamurti-stotra* is supreme in its combination of *bhakti* with profound doctrines of Advaita. He is credited with having established on the basis of scriptural teachings the worship of the six embodied deities, namely, Aditya, Ambika, Vishnu, Ganesa, Siva and Subrahmanya. His reconciliation of *bhakti* and *jnana* in his *Prabodhasudhakara* testifies to the fact that *bhakti* occupies an important place on the practical side of Advaita. This is also evident from his analysis of the *Bhagavata* school. While commenting on the *Brahma sutra*[3], which refutes the view-point of the *Bhagavata* school, Sri Sankara does not entirely disapprove of that system. Some of its points he accepts, as they are, according to him supported by *srutis* and *smrtis*. It is important to see just what aspect of the *Bhagavata* school appeared to Sri Sankara as valid and for this purpose we quote the brief statement of the *Bhagavata* position which he places before his criticism.

The *Bhagavata* school admits that Vasudeva is the highest reality and He is of the nature of pure consciousness. He is both the material and the efficient cause of the world. He exists as Sankarshana, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha which stand respectively for the individual soul, the mind, and the ego-sense. Vasudeva is the ultimate cause and the three others are His effects. By devotion towards the highest reality the individual soul reaches it.

Sri Sankara, while examining this view, states that in their description of the highest self, the Bhagavatas are in harmony with the Veda which teaches that the highest self exists in a manifold form. He admits the view that devotion towards the highest reality (Vasudeva) leads the individual soul to it, by stating that this view is based on *srutis* and *smrtis*[4]. Only Sri Sankara objects to the doctrine of the origination of the individual soul from the highest self. If such were the case, the individual soul would be non-permanent and there would be no possibility of final release. The point that is of profound importance here to note is that Sri Sankara holds the view that devotion to God (*Isvarapranidhana*), is based on scriptural and *smrti* texts. And he considers *bhakti* to be a proximate means (*antaranga-sadhana*) of the intuitive knowledge of Brahman.

In his commentary on the *Brahma-sutra—paratttu tacchruteh* (II, iii, 41) Sri Sankara states that the intuitive knowledge of Brahman which leads to liberation arises from the major texts of the Upanishads through the grace of God. There is also a well-known saying that the disposition to study Advaita arises from the grace of God.[5] The grace of God could arise only from loving devotion or *bhakti* towards Him.

It is not therefore right to maintain, as some have tried to do, that *bhakti* has no place in Advaita. It is there, but it does not exhibit all the various features which as the result of later elaboration and development are associated with it. The word *bhakti*, it is true, is used by Sri Sankara in the sense of

2. *Ibid.*, II, i, 13.
3. *Ibid.*, II, ii, 42.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Isvaranugrahadeva pumsem advaitavasana.*

nididhyasana[6], which is more intellectual than emotional, and in the sense of the intuitive knowledge of Brahman itself[7]. But *bhakti* meaning loving devotion towards Isvara is also noticeably present in Advaita. It is instrumental in the attainment of release only indirectly, that is, through knowledge and not directly and finally.

Sri Sankara in his commentary on the *Brahma-sutra* says : As long as the *Jiva* is associated with the adjunct mind, so long only is the *jiva* a *jiva*. In reality, however, there is nothing like *jiva*-hood apart from what is fancied to be such by reason of this adjunct.[8] He proceeds to point out: 'This relation of Brahman with mind has but *avidya* as its source. and this *avidya* which has Brahman as its content cannot be removed by anything other than the knowledge of Brahman. Hence this relation with such limiting adjuncts as the mind does not cease so long as the identity of *jiva* and Brahman is not realized'[9]. When *avidya* is removed by the intuitive knowledge of Brahman, *jiva* is freed from the characteristics such as finitude, ignorance etc. It continues to live in the body till the *prarabdha karma* is exhausted. This state is known as *jivanmukti*. When the *prarabdha karma* is exhausted by the experience of its results, then *jiva* is dissociated from its physical accompaniments and remains as Brahman. This is known as *videhamukti*.

It follows from the above that Brahman has attained the state of *jiva* because of *avidya* and its product, the body-mind complex, and that divesting the *jiva* of *avidya* and its product is liberation. *Avidya* present in Brahman is the root-cause of all evils and the knowledge of Brahman, necessarily brings about the removal of all miseries. Brahman which is liberation is self-evident and it does not require anything for its manifestation. But, since it is veiled by *avidya* and since *avidya* could be removed only by the intuitive knowledge of Brahman, the latter is said to be the means to liberation. It comes to this : Intuitive knowledge of Brahman leads to liberation through the annihilation of *avidya*.

From a study of the *Bhagavad-gita* as a whole, it is possible for us to gather that in it three paths are recognised and dealt with as paths leading to the intuitive knowledge of Brahman ; and, they are : the path of action (*karma-yoga*), the path of devotion (*bhakti-yoga*) and the path of knowledge (*jnana-yoga*).

Of these three, *karma-yoga* is the remote means (*bahiranga-sadhana*) and *bhakti yoga* and *jnana yoga* are the proximate means (*antaranga-sadhana*) of the intuitive knowledge of Brahman. The instrumental cause of the latter is the major texts of the Upanishads according to Prakasatman, and mind according to Vachaspatimisra. It may be added here that Prakasatman's view is the prevalent one in Advaita.

Karma-yoga consists in performing duties relating to one's stage and class of life by dedicating their results to God. The performance of deeds in this way gives rise to merit or *punya* which removes the sin that is present in the mind of the aspirant and leads to the desire to know Brahman by giving rise to four traits, namely, *nitya-anitya vastu viveka*; *ihaomutrarthabhogaviraga*; *samadisadhansampat*, and *mumukshutva*. Sri Sankara in his *Aparokshanubhuti* states that there arises the four-fold aid to the aspirants by the grace of God who is pleased by their penance in the form of performance of duties relating to one's stage and class of life [10]. Madhusudana Sarasvati in his *Goodharthadipika* points out that the performance of duties includes *bhakti* towards God which is of the form of uttering his mantras and hymns[11]. One who has thus performed duties relating to one's stage and class of life attains the desire to know Brahman. Duties thus are the remote means to the intuitive knowledge of Brahman and the *Bhagavad-gita*[12] passages such as : "Worshipping God by performing one's duties one becomes qualified to attain the knowledge of Brahman" affirms

6. *Moksha sadhanasamgryam bhaktireva gariyasi, svasvarupanusandhanam bhaktirityabhidhiyate* (*Vivekachudamani*).
7. *Bhagavat-gita-bhashya*, VIII, 22.
8. *Brahma-sutra-bhashya*, II, iii, 30.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Aparokshanubhuti*, 3.
11. *Goodharthadipika*, Nirnaya Sagar Press Edition, p. 3.
12. *Bhagavat-gita*, XVIII, 46.

this view. And this is the first of the several stages leading to the intuitive knowledge of Brahman.

The aspirant then takes up asceticism, resorts to a preceptor and pursues what is known as the path of knowledge or *jnana-yoga*. This consists of *sravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana*. The intuitive knowledge of Brahman arises to the aspirant from the major texts of the Upanishads. But it is not effective in dispelling *avidya* as it is associated with the impediments present in the mind of the aspirant, namely, the latent impressions arising from the enjoyment of the worldly objects (*vishaya-bhoga-vasana*), doubt regarding the validity of the Upanishads in conveying Brahman (*pramanasambhavana*), doubt regarding the truth of the import of the Upanishads (*prameyasambhavana*), and an unconscious reassertion of old habits of thought (*viparitabhavana*) in the form ' my body ', ' I am lean ', ' I am happy' , etc. Cultivation of the qualities like *sama*, *dama*, etc., remove *vishayabhogavasana*. *Sravana* or vedantic study removes *pramanasambhavana*. And *manana* which consists, in arguing within oneself after knowing definitely what the Upanishads teach with a view to convincing oneself that the import of the Upanishads is true dispels *prameyasambhavana*. *Sravana* and *manana* represent the second stage in the scheme of practical disciplines in Advaita.

The last impediment, namely, *viparitabhavana* is removed by *nididhyasana* which consists in maintaining the knowledge of Brahman. The latter, although intuitive, appears to be mediate because it is associated with *viparita bhavana* present in the mind of the aspirant. *Nididhyasana* is a higher form of meditation and it requires much concentration of thought. The latter would be possible only when the mind becomes free from the impressions of the external objects which it had received in its innumerable previous births. And *bhakti* towards God removes the impressions of the external objects from the mind and thereby enables one to have concentration of thought. Madhusudana Sarasvati in his *Bhaktirasayana* speaks of two kinds of *bhakti* as *sadhya bhakti* and *sadhana bhakti* or *bhakti* as the realized goal and *bhakti* in the form of the auxiliaries which lead to and help the realization itself. These two kinds of *bhakti* are signified by the term *bhakti* itself. When the word is interpreted to mean the mental state that has assumed the form or image of personal God then that mental stage which is the achieved goal is referred to as *sadhya bhakti*. On the other hand, if we interpret the word to mean the process through which the mind is made to assume the form of God then it refers to the means of attaining the fruit. The latter is termed *sadhana bhakti* which consists of acts of worship such as hearing the glories of God, meditation upon Him, prostration and the like. Observance of the acts of worship makes the mind assume the form of God which is termed *sadhya bhakti* or *bhakti sthayibhava*. This develops into *bhaktirasa* which is of the nature of exceeding love towards God. Mind becomes freed from the impressions of external objects by *sadhya bhakti* which develops into *bhaktirasa* and thus the aspirant gets concentration of thought which enables him to pursue *nididhyasana* which, in turn, removes the *viparita bhavana*. And, *nididhyasana* represents the third stage in the scheme of practical disciplines in Advaita.

The mind of the aspirant is now freed from the four-fold impediment. And the major texts of the Upanishads when contemplated at this stage gives rise to the intuitive knowledge of Brahman which is effective in annihilating *avidya*. The rise of the intuitive knowledge of Brahman signifies the result of the scheme of practical disciplines in Advaita.

One who has attained the intuitive knowledge of Brahman remains as a *jivanmukta* till his *prarabdhakarma* is exhausted. The *jivanmukta's* life has two phases : It is either *samadhi* where he is one with Brahman, or *vyutthana* or reversion to empirical life. From the state of *samadhi*, the *jivanmukta* comes back to empirical life either of his own accord or when prompted by others. There is the most advanced stage of *samadhi* from which he will on no account revert to empirical life. When his *prarabdha karma* is exhausted by the experience of its results, the *jivanmukta* is dissociated from his physical accompaniments and he remains as Brahman. This is *videhamukti* or final liberation.

The *jivanmukta* worships God with love when he reverts to empirical life either of his own accord or when promoted by others Madhusudana Sarasvati points out that no fruit results from the worship of God on the part of a *jivanmukta*. Worship of God is spontaneous in his case like the qualities of

compassion, etc.[13]. His worship of God is based upon the latent impressions that had arisen from the worship of God prior to his attaining the knowledge of Brahman. The state of *jivanmukti* may be said to represent the penultimate stage in the fulfilment of the scheme of practical disciplines in Advaita. And *videhamukti* or final liberation is the ultimate goal.

It would have become clear from the above that *bhakti* or loving devotion to God is absolutely necessary in order to pursue *nididhyasana* which is the most important constituent of *jnana yoga*. Apart from this, the grace of God which could be attained only by loving devotion to Him is imperative in order to overcome several impediments that stand in the way of attaining the knowledge of Brahman. Each preceding stage would lead to the succeeding stage and would culminate in the intuitive knowledge of Brahman only when the impediments that are due to our past demerits are surmounted[14]. And the impediments will be removed or surmounted only by the grace of God which is possible only by loving devotion towards Him. *Thus at every stage in the scheme of practical disciplines in Advaita,* bhakti *and its result, namely, the grace of God are necessary.*

Those who do not pursue *jnana yoga*, but pursue *bhakti* independently have the direct vision of God while living here, reach the world, of Hiranyagarbha after the final fall of their body, attain the intuitive knowledge of Brahman from the major texts of the Upanishads that are manifested to them by the grace of God, and are liberated along with Hiranyagarbha at the end of the cosmic age.

Thus Advaita accords a very prominent place to *bhakti* in its scheme of practical disciplines. As the Supreme goal in Advaita is the identity of *jiva* with Brahman, what is termed *bhakti* is the striving for this *sakshatkara* or realisation by means of and through devotion to personal God. Faith is the basis of devotion. Beginning with faith, and worshipping with devotion the personal God, the aspirant ultimately experiences his identity with Brahman.

13. *Goodhartho-dipika*, p. 6.
14. *Ibid*

ADVAITA IN THE VEDAS

By

DR. BRATINDRA KUMAR SENGUPTA.

It has sometimes been wrongly argued that the *Samhitas* of the Vedas do not present any coherent idea about the monistic and transcendental nature of the Self. This wrong approach stems from the argument that the *Samhitas* are only panegyrics or eulogies of various deities who are offered oblations for the material prosperity of men. Hence the transcendental or spiritual monism of Vedanta is totally absent in these hymns which are, again wrongly, ascribed as earlier than the coherent monism contained .in the *Aranyakas* and *Upanishad.* How much lop-sided this presupposition is, will be evident from our discussion which follows, showing that the so-called temporal segregation of the different portions of the Vedic Literature is a product of imagination.

Let us start from what Acharya Yaska, one of the earliest interpreters of the Vedas in his well-known work, the *Nirukta,* has said. The *Rk-Samhita* contains a *mantra* as follows :—

> "*adhenva charati mayayaisha*
> *vacham susruva aphalamapushpam*
> (*Rk-Samhita* 8/2/24/4)

Yaska explains the *mantra* thus—One who does not know the real meaning or import of the Vedic *mantras* and merely utters them, plays false to himself. One does not get the desired, results of the *mantras.* Neither here nor hereinafter will one get the fulfilment of any desire, simply for the ignorance of the import. Hence the 'import' of the Vedic *mantras,* is the fruit and its preceding state is the flower (*artham vachah pushapaphlamaha—Nirukta,* Upodghata-prakarana). Here Yaska has elaborated three kinds of 'import' *viz.,* (1) *Yajna,* (2) *Daivata* and (3) *Adhyatma.* The meaning of the nature of sacrifice is *Yajna,* the meaning of the nature of the deity is *Daivata* and the meaning of the nature of the Self is *Adhyatma.* Yaska also says—" *Yajna-daivate pushpa-phale Devatadhyatme va*" (*Nirukta,* Upodghata prakarana). Herein the state of fruit and flower are connotative of the result or effect and the antecedent or cause. In one sense, when material prosperity is desired, the *Yajna* import becomes the flower and the *Daivata* import becomes the fruit. The knowledge of the nature of the sacrifice has the result of the nature of the Deity itself. In another sense when transcendental emancipation (*Summum bonum*) is desired, the *Yajna* and *Daivata* both become the flower and the *Adhyatma* becomes the fruit.

Let us here examine briefly Yaska's view about the nature of the Deity (*Devata*). In the *Daivata-kanda* of the *Nirukta* he has said—" *Yaja-Samyogad raja stutim labheta, raja-samyogad yuddhopakaranani*". Durgacharya, the famous commentator of the *Nirukta* has explained this passage by the maxim of *Stuti-Samkramanyaya, i.e.,* a successive relation of praise or eulogy (*stuti*) from the beginning to the culmination. Here, therefore, the 'weapons' of a king are praised for their relation to the king, the king is eulogised for his relation to the

Sacrifice, the sacrifice is praised for its relation to the Deity and ultimately, the Deity is an object of supreme eulogy for the Deity is related to the Supreme Self.

Let us now examine some of the *mantras* from the *Rg-Veda* to show the germs of philosophical speculations in the monistic school. The famous *Asya Vamasya* Hymn in Ashtaka II (I/22/164/1-52) of the *Rk-Samhita* is a well known philosophical hymn, which has been explained in those *mantras* where there is philosophical speculation, to be highly expository of the monistic theme by Sayana, the great commentator. Moreover, Atmananda, son of Vishnu, of the family of Gotama had written a very great philosophical commentary on this Hymn. (*Vide* Edition with notes of *Asya Vamasya Hymn* by Dr. C. Kunhan Raja). The first *mantra* of the Hymn runs as :

> *asya vamasya palitasya hotustasya bhrata madhyamo astyas' nah.*
>
> *trtiyo bhrata ghrtaprshto asyatrapas'yam vispatim saptaputram.*

This *mantra* particularly refers to the three great manifestations of the Supreme Self. The first is the Great Creator of the whole universe (Paramesvara). The second is the all-pervading *sutratma* or the thread-like soul, which is equated with Vayu, the great Wind-God. It has been supported in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* (3/7/2) to become an authority on this philosophical interpretation. (Cf " *Vayuna vai Gotama sutrena ayamcha lokah paraschalokah sarvani bhutanicha samdrbhani bhavanti.*") The third is the *Virat* which is the presiding Deity of the gross physical forms. It is He who is the Lord of all visible worlds and of all the created beings. He is, therefore, *Vispati*, and, again supported as such by the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* (1/3/43) designating Him as " Sarvasyapatih sarvasyesanah."

Another well known *mantra* in this Hymn runs as follows :

> "*dva suparna sayuja sakhaya samanam vrksham parisasvajate tayoranyah pippalam svadvattyanasnannanyo abhichakasiti*" (Mantra No. 20).

This mantra is also found in the *Mundaka Upanishad* (3/1/1) and in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (4/6). In the Rgvedic Hymn, this *mantra* has been explained by the commentators to expatiate on the twin-form of Jiva and Isvara in the same locus of body and to be allegorically referred to as the pair of birds nesting on the same tree. Ultimately the *mantra* has been explained to show the real identity, as in the monistic interpretation, of these two principles. Acharya Sankara, the great Advaita commentator has, however, explained this *mantra* according to the interpretation of the *Paingi-rahasya Brahmana* to refer to the two principles of *sattva* (*buddhi* or intelligence) and *Kshetrajna* (*jiva* or the individual soul). Cf. *Brahmasutra-Sankarabhashya* on *Brahmasutra*, 1/2/3 and 1/2/12 under *Guhadhikarana*; also on *Brahmasutra* (3/3/34).

Let us also refer to the famous Rgvedic *mantra* (Rk-Samhita, I/22/164/46), wherein the non-difference of all the divine forms with the One, Undifferentiated " Sat" or *Brahman* has been established. This is also in line with the great monistic interpretation of Acharya Sankara.

We may also refer to the Rg-vedic *mantra* (Rk-Samhita, 8/7/17/6) where the process of creation is spoken of as inscrutable. This *mantra* has been quoted under *Brahma sutra—Sankarabhashya* (*drsyate tu* 2/1/6). We conclude with the *Rgvedic mantra* (8/3/16/2) which runs as :

> '*Kim svidasid adhishthanam arambhanam katamat svit kathasit*
>
> *Yate bhumim janayan visvakarma vidyamaurnonmahina visvachakshah*

Here we have the germs of all the later philosophical theories of creation, as emanating from the Supreme Self or Brahman, and, therefore, the question here is regarding the real locus of all creation. We may here recall a similar query expressed in the famous later hymn known as the *Sivamahimnah-stotram* where it is said:

> *Kimihah Kimkayah Sa Khalu Kimupayastribhuvanam*
>
> *Kimadharo dhata srjati Kimupadana iticha*

The self-revelatory Vedic mantras are, to all intents and purposes, the basic foundation of all later philosophical speculations, particularly culminating in the monistic interpretation.

PRECEPTORS OF ADVAITA

By

DR. N. VEEZHINATHAN.

The Philosophy of Advaita centres around the doctrine of *avidya* or *maya.* The distinguishing feature of this school is the doctrine that the material world is an illusion. It is therefore frequently referred to as *maya-vada.* The ultimate reality is Brahman which is attributeless (*nirguna*) and formless (*nirakara*) and which is of the nature of absolute consciousness. Owing to *avidya* or *maya* it appears as *jiva,* Isvara, and the world. The true nature of Isvara and *jiva* is Brahman. The universe as such is indeterminable either as real or as unreal. *Jiva* is to realize its identity with Brahman. To remain as Brahman is the ultimate goal, that is, liberation. And, this is possible only by overcoming *avidya. Avidya* could be removed by the direct experience of Brahman. This, in short, is the philosophy of Advaita.

The concept of Brahman as *nirguna* and *nirakara,* and as associated with *avidya,* finds full expression in the upanishads and has been foreshadowed in the *Rg-Veda.* In a remarkably profound hymn, the *Rg-veda* speaks of the ultimate reality as one and as associated with *avidya.* And the hymn is as follows :

na mrtyurasit amrtam na tarhi
na ratrya anka asit praketah
anit avatam svadhaya tadekam
tasmaddha anyam na param Kinchana asa

Sri Sankara cites this hymn in his commentary on the *Brahma sutra.* The hymn means:

" Before the creation of this world there existed neither the lord of death nor the nectar of the divine beings ; there did not exist the sun and the moon—the marks of day and night. There existed only *That one* associated with *avidya.* It was not directed by anything, and, in fact there existed nothing apart from it."

As Professor Hiriyanna observes : " we are here on the threshold of the Upanishadic monism." Later in the Upanishad we find the full development of this and other allied concepts which constitute the philosophy of Advaita.

The philosophy of Advaita has been expounded by preceptors from time immemorial. According to tradition, Isvara or the Supreme lord imparted the knowledge of Brahman or the truths of Vedanta to Brahma, who, in turn, imparted it to Vasishtha-his *manasa-putra.* From Vasishtha to Suka—the truths of Vedanta were handed down as from father to son in succession. Sakti, Parasara, Vyasa and Suka—belong to this line of succession. With Suka and Gaudapada starts the line of succession from preceptor to disciple. The earliest extant formulation of the Advaitic doctrine is found in Gaudapada *Karika* which summarizes the teaching of the *Mandukya Upanishad.* His grand-disciple Sri Sankara expounded the doctrine in a systematic way in his commentaries on the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad-gita,* and the *Brahma-sutra.* His four disciples—Padmapada, Suresvara, Totaka and Hastamalaka, enriched the Advaita literature by their commentaries on Sri Sankara's works and by their independent

treatises elucidating the important concepts of Advaita.

Before Sri Sankara there were three noteworthy Advaitic preceptors who did not belong to either of the lineages described above. They are : Sundarapandya, Brahmanandin and Dravidacharya. Sundarapandya has been identified as the author of the three verses which Sri Sankara cites in his commentary on the *Brahma-sutra, tat-tu samanvayat.* Brahmanandin wrote a work called *Vakya* which was an exposition of the import of the *Chandogya Upanishad.* Dravidacharya embellished this work by his commentary on it. These two works are not available ; but they are known from the references to them in other works on Advaita.

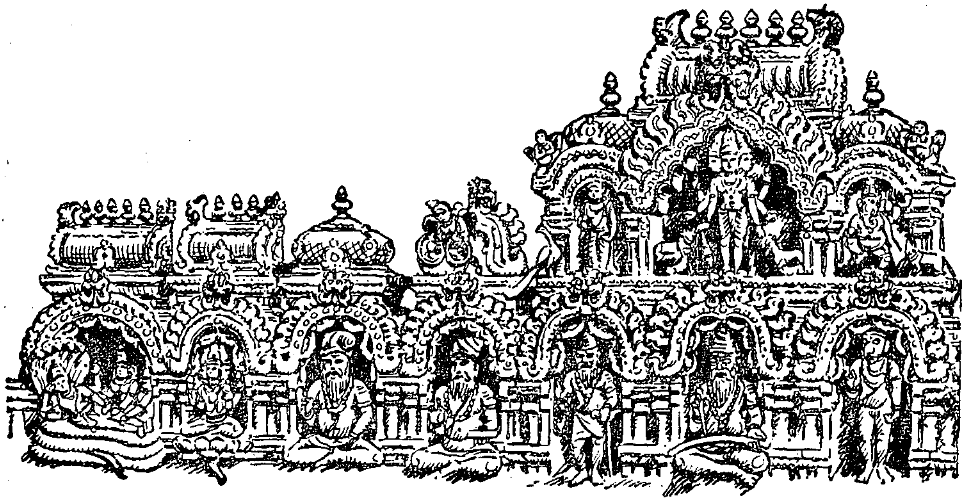
Apart from these authors who belonged to the Advaitic school, there was one Bhartrprapancha who advocated the doctrines of *Bhedabheda* and the *Brahma-parinama vada.* He held, as against Advaita, that liberation results from the combination of *jnana* and *karma.* Then there were the schools of Sankhya, Nyaya-vaiseshika and Buddhism. The Sankhya concept of *prakrti* as the source of the universe by being independent of Purusha, the Nyaya Vaiseshika conception of atoms as the material cause of the universe, and Isvara as its efficient cause and the Buddhistic conception void or manifold momentary consciousness of the ultimate principle—all these are directly opposed to the Vedantic position of Brahman as being the ultimate principle and the material and efficient cause of the universe. Sri Sankara in his commentaries on the Upanishads and the *Brahma-sutra* refutes these positions. In his Bhashyas on the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gita* he refutes the Bhartrprapancha view, namely, that *jnana* associated with *karma* leads to liberation. Sri Sankara's disciples notably Suresvara and Padmapada—paid particular attention to the criticism of these theories in their commentaries.

Sarvajnatman, a younger contemporary of Sri Sankara, wrote the work *Samkshepasariraka* which is a succinct exposition in verse of the views of Sri Sankara as stated in his *bhashya* on the *Brahma-sutra.* Preceptors of Advaita wrote many commentaries on Sri Sankara's works and these commentaries. were supplemented by other commentaries.

To appreciate the role played by the preceptors of Advaita in the post-Sankara period it is necessary to note the history of Indian philosophy in general . There were authors who were active in opposing the philosophy of Sankara. The opponents of Sankara and his school were mainly of two groups—the Naiyayikas and the Bhedabheda-vadins. These two formed the main targets of the criticism of the Advaitins in the centuries immediately following Sri Sankara. Of the exponents of the *bhedabheda-vada,* Bhaskara who appeared on the scene immediately after Sankara led the opposition against the exposition of Sankara. The advaitic dialectics against this critic of Advaita had five of its leading protagonists in Vachaspatimisra, Anubhutisvarupa, Prakasatman, Anandanubhava, and Anandapurna. Bhaskara upheld not only the old pre-Sankara philosophical positions of *bhedabheda* and *parinamavada,* but also upheld the ancient view on the *Sadhana* plane of combining *jnana* and *karma* and the monistic mode called *tridandisannyasa.* The preceptors mentioned above criticized effectively Bhaskara who symbolised this type of opposition to Sankara.

In the field of Nyaya also there was revival of activity which was directed mainly against the new philosophy of *jaganmithyatva.* In the times before the 10th century—if we may draw a rough demarcation like that—the orthodox *darsanas,* particularly the Nyaya were concerned with opposing the Buddhistic schools. After this period when the influence of Buddhism waned, the attention of the orthodox schools turned in a more pronounced manner against each other. The Nyaya system was rendered more or less ineffective and the *bhedabheda* school was superseded by the new developments of the theistic and pluralistic schools of Ramanuja and Madhva. Later Advaitic dialectics concerned its lf in the main with the last mentioned schools.

When we view the history of Advaita in relation to the other schools on the lines indicated above, we can see what important role the able preceptors of Advaita played in the field when post-Sankara Advaita had to contend against the *bhedabheda,* the Nyaya and the Visishtadvaita and Dvaita schools. We have already referred to the five preceptors of Advaita who led the opposition against the *bhedabheda vada* of Bhaskara. Sri Harsha, Anandanubhava, Chitsukha. Anandapurna, Ramadvaya, and Pratyagsvarupa refuted the Nyaya system and proved on the basis of reasoning the illusory nature of the phenomenal world. Madhusudana Sarasvati in his commentary on the *Samkshepasariraka* critically examin-



Panel in Sri Kamakshi temple, Kanchipuram, depicting the Preceptors of Advaita.
upper row (centre) : Dattatreya or the Trinity in one :
lower row (left to right) : Narayana (Vishnu), Brahma, Vasishta, Sakti, Parasara, Vyasa and Suka.

ed the view-points of Visishtadvaita. And Nrsimhasrama, Madhusudana Sarasvati and Brahmananda Sarasvati were active in opposing the Dvaita school and in answering the objections raised against Advaita by that school.

There were other preceptors like Jnanaghanapada, Anandabodha, Vidyaranya, Sadananda, Ramakrishnadvarin who wrote independent treatises elucidating the important concepts of Advaita. Appayya Dikshita and Paramasivendra Sarasvati, the 57th *acharya* of the Kamakoti-pitha enriched Advaita literature by works such as *Siddhanta-lesa-samgraha*, *Vedantanamaratna Sahasra*, *Dahara-Vidyaprakasika* and the like. Sadasiva Brahmendra, the disciple of Paramasivendra, wrote commentaries on *Brahma-sutra*, *Siddhanta-lesa-samgraha*, etc.

Special mention must be made of Upanishad Brahmendra whose *matha* at Kanchipuram has close contacts with the Kamakoti-pitha. The most important and sustained work of his is his commentaries on the one hundred and eight Upanishads. There was another important preceptor Prthvidhara who was the *Sannyasin* of the *Bharati* order and whom Sri Sankara is said to have installed as the first head of the Sringagiri Pitha. He came to Kanchi along with some of his disciples on hearing the news that Sri Sankara had attained *siddhi* there. His disciples stayed at Kanchi ; and so we have, in the Kamakshi temple, a sculpture of a *sannyasin* of the *Bharati* order.

There are others who wrote works on Advaita in regional languages. Mention may be made of Jnanadeva, Nischaladasa, Potana and Tandavarayar. Poets like Kalidasa and Krishnamisra were great Advaitins and they introduced the Advaita concepts in their works.

Devotees of His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Svami of Kanchi Kamakoti-pitha, as a humble token of their veneration and love towards His Holiness, contributed articles on the Preceptors of Advaita mentioned above, for the volume entitled *Preceptors of Advaita* to commemorate the auspicious occasion of the Diamond Jubliee of His Holiness's ascension to the great *Kamakoti-pitha*. Padmabhushan Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan—an Advaitin by temperament and training, and the Director of the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras—has edited this volume with great care and much devotion. He undertook the very important task of making this volume comprehensive without being tedious and to preserve those materials which will be of interest to future researchers. And this volume has been reverently dedicated to His Holiness *The Sage of Kanchi.*

A few words about the Sankarite institutions as we have them today are necessary. During the close of his career, Sri Sankara conceived the idea of establishing *amnaya-pithas* in order to preserve and propagate the Advaita Vedanta for the benefit of posterity. An *amnaya-pitha* consists of a *sakti*, a *devata*, and a *kshetra*. The texts dealing with the *amnayu-pithas* preserved in the Dvaraka and Puri mutts state that Goddess Kamakshi is the *pitha-sakti*; Adivaraha is the *pitha-devata* ; and Ramesvaram is the *kshetra* for the institution of the *amnaya-pitha* for the southern region. It is well-known that in the Kamakshi temple at Kanchi we have the *devata*-Adivaraha. And Sri Sankara linked Adivaraha—the *devata*, and Kamakshi the *sakti* with Ramesvaram. This *pitha* is known as the *Kamakoti pitha* ; and the unique feature of this *pitha* is that Sri Sankara himself assumed the headship of the *pitha* and attained *siddhi* there. His Holiness the present head of the *Kamakoti pitha* is the sixty-eighth in the hallowed line of succession from Adi Sankara. He is a *jivanmukta* and thus is one of the greatest Preceptors of Advaita. Dr. Mahadevan has written a biography of His Holiness in this volume . And he has added to it translations of two discourses of His Holiness : one on "*Advaita*" and the other on "*The significance of Sankara-jayanti.*"

In the *Mukapanchasati* Goddess Kamakshi, the *sakti* of the *Kamakoti Pitha* is praised as a *preceptor of Advaita.*

Kundali kumari kutile
chandi charcharasavitri chamunde
gunini guharini guhye
gurumurte tvam namami Kamakshi.

Two articles on Goddess Kamakshi—the preceptor of Advaita, one article on Sankarite Institutions and another on the *Kamakotipitha* wherein Goddess Kamakshi occupies a pre-eminent place appear in this volume.

Thanks to the efforts of Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, we now have in a single volume all the essential and important features of Advaita Vedanta and its literature.

A VALUATIONAL DISCREPANCY IN ADVAITA VEDANTA

By

PROF. A. G. JAVADEKAR.

1. Discrepancy between the unreal world and the real self.—Sankaracharya's teachings have usually been summed up in the following lines :

Brahma satyam Jaganmithya
Jivo Brahmaiva naparah.

It means that Brahman is real, the world is unreal and the individual self is verily Brahman and nothing else.

Whatever be the truth in this teaching, there is some discrepancy in it. An attempt is made in this paper to point out the discrepancy and explain the necessity of making such discrepancy.

2. The reality of Brahman is valuational.—There is no difficulty in accepting the reality of Brahman. It is the eternal, the unalterable, the uncontradictable, the imperishable, the infinite, the perfect, the absolute, the unconditioned that indeed ought to constitute the real. These *criteria* of reality are valuational. The opposite of these is the world and hence it is unreal. The world is transient, alterable, contradictable, perishable, finite, imperfect, relative, conditioned. The valuational *criteria* themselves determine the unreality of the world.

Why is Brahman declared to have the essence of Being—Knowledge—Bliss ? Because being is preferable to nothing. And so is knowledge preferable to ignorance, and bliss preferable to misery. It is not merely a metaphysical or ontological idealism, but essentially an axiological or valuational idealism. Experience is indeed the essence of reality, which would be the general idealistic position. But the Vedanta maintains a valuation criterion to measure the reality of the experience. The world is experienced and has to be real, but it is declared to be unreal only because it does not stand the test of value. Within the experience that which is preferable stands on a higher plane of reality than the one which cannot be so preferred. Thus it is the most preferable or the perfect that constitutes the real. Such determination of reality in terms of the experience of value is, what I have chosen to name, Axiomatic Idealism. Axiomatics is the study of human knowledge or experience in terms of values. It is in terms of these experiences of values that the validity of those experiences are determined. And it is this valuational validity that would ultimately determine the nature of reality. This in brief is the statement of Axiomatic Idealism which vedanta advocates. *Ananda* (Bliss) is the principle of valuation. The description of Brahman as *Sacchidananda* means that *ananda* realised is nothing but value realized.

3. Brahman is Paramartha, Jagat is Vyavahararta.—Thus when Brahman and the world are compared, it is evident that Brahman is real, and on the basis of the application of the same criteria of reality, the world must be regarded as unreal. And in declaring, this valuational unreality of the world Sankaracharya has given us the right estimation of the world. Brahman is the essence

(*sara*), the world has no essence (*asara*). Brahman is *Paramartha* or the supreme value; the world has only a pragmatic value *Vyavahartha.*

But following the same line of thought, it is not understandable how the individual self is declared to be identical with Brahman. For if it is identical with Brahman, it becomes as real as Brahman. For all that we know, the individual selves are in this world of our experience. And if the world is unreal, the individual selves must of necessity have the same unreal character. The discrepancy that is clearly evident is this. In the unreal world there is or there are the individual selves which are declared to be real, being absolutely identical with Brahman.

This discrepancy of placing real *jiva* in an unreal *jagat*, is on account of using different criteria for these two entities.

Whatever criterion has led us into thinking that the world is unreal, if applied to the individual self would also inevitably lead us into the accepting the unreality of the self.

The world is plural and various, so are the selves. The world is contingent, finite, imperfect and so on, devoid of the absolutely perfect value which makes it unreal. But so are the selves finite and imperfect, ignorant and miserable suffering from change, decay and death. How could such selves be real ? They share the same unreality of the world. In brief, whatever valuational principle is used to denounce the world to be unreal, when uniformly used in the case of the selves must make them too unreal.

4. Lakshana applied to the Self.—But when the self is declared to be real on the basis of its identity with Brahman, a different line of thinking appears to be deliberately taken, than the one followed in the case of the world. The line of thinking so far as the self is concerned, is the disregard of the unessentialities or accidental limitations of the *upadhis*, and fixing attention on the essential sameness of the self as Brahman. This method is known as *Bhaga tyaga-lakshana* or *Jahadajahallakshana.* The Upanishadic text "*Tattavamasi*" in understood by the application of the secondary sense (*Lakshana*) as illustrated classically by the example of the sentence, so'yam Devadattah". Though there is an apparent distinction between the characteristics of Devadatta as a young lad and as a grown up man, there still is the essential identity of personality. This identity is basic and underlies the unimportant differences which must be given up in the recognition of the true identity.

In a similar fashion the foundational identity of the selves with Brahman has to be understood. The differences make the selves appear as many imperfect, ignorant, miserable creatures but underlying these accidents, there is one reality of Brahman.

Now the question is why should there be this different mode of explanation chosen in the case of the selves than the mode of explanation in the case of the world ? Is this not a clear case of the application of double standards ? Has this procedure not led the whole description into discrepancy between the valuation of the world and the selves ?

If these double standards, of valuation are given up for the sake of uniformity and rationalization in philosophy it is clear that either both these categories, *viz.*, the world and the individual selves are unreal as shown above, or both of them are real. If valuationally the world has not the same status as Brahman, the individual selves too cannot have the same status as Brahman.

But if we accept the identity of the individual selves with Brahman, on the basis of the disregard of their accidental features, then we can also accept the identity of the world of objects with Brahman, disregarding the accidental features of these world objects and concentrating upon their foundational identity with Brahman. Actually in the Advaita Vedanta we are familiar with such procedure with regard to the world of objects.

5. Lakshana applied to the World.—Thus for example, we analyse the world of objects into the five characteristics found in them. They are *asti* (is-ness), *bhati* (knowability), *priya* (value), *nama* (name) and *rpua* (form) of which the first three are eternal characteristics and the last two accidental ones. The first three constitute the Brahmanhood of the objects and the last two are owing to *maya.* In short, the world in its essence is Brahman and has the same identity which the individual self has with Brahman. Just as the self is real only as Brahman and not apart from Brahman, the world too is real as Brahman and not apart from Brahman. Thus conceived the discrepancy pointed out above comes to be removed.

6. Either both real or both unreal.—In brief, the world as well as the self have the same status when a uniform standard of

evaluation of their reality is applied to each of them. Whatever leads one to accept the essential sameness of the self and Brahman must compel him to accept the essential sameness of the world and Brahman too.

Again whatever consideration might have resulted into condemning the world to be unreal must also result in the condemnation of the selves too as unreal.

But instead of following this uniformity of treatment, it appears that a deliberate discrepancy of valuation has been followed, in the statement : " the world is unreal ; the individual self is verily Brahman." That has resulted in an inconsistency of positions.

7. Reason for discrepancy in treatment. —But what must be the reason of such glaring discrepancy ?

The reason, again, is valuational. Having declared the reality of Brahman, the individual selves are to be inspired into realization of this Reality. They are to be made aware of their real and absolute identity with that Reality. The self must not consider himself to be a mean, worthless fellow. If he deems himself to be such that is only his ignorance, which he must throw out. He is made conscious of the potential divinity. He has only to actualize that potentiality. He could not become Brahman, unless he were really Brahman.

What comes in the way of this realization is his attachment to the world of objects. The plurality and variety of the world is very attractive. The self is enticed towards it and he gets absorbed into the allurings. By physiological and psychological dispositions he is an extrovert and he spontaneously follows the line of the least resistence. His flesh, his senses, his instincts are the elements in him which drag him to the downward path. Hence the question was of his turning into himself. He is to be made an introvert. From the external observation of the world he should be made to follow introspection and do self-meditation. How best could this be done ? It was by pointing out the futility of the world. The attachment to the objects could be removed by making the self aware of their vagaries, trifles, insignificances. In short, the self can turn within himself only when he realizes the unreality of the world. Therefore it must be valuationally shown to be worthless.

Therefore, the world comes to be condemned and the ' individual ' self commended for his glorious nature.

ESSENTIAL ONENESS OF RELIGIONS

By

MISS EUGENIA BORGHINI.

The conference on Sankara and Shanmata, conducted from June 1st to 9th in Madras, shows the will of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchipuram Kamakoti Peetham, to stress the oneness of Hinduism which underlies the various cults.

Like Sri Adi Sankara, the great Jnani, His Holiness knows that Love and Knowledge go together. Like the great Advaitin, He knows that all deities are the various forms of the endless Divine Power and must therefore rightly be worshipped by all human beings. But we common people, we have a tendency to forget basic unity and to believe that only our cult, our Deity, are the right ones.

When we find ourselves face to face with the practices and the *Ishta Devata* of others, we are usually angry and spiteful. At our best, we are upset ; we are sure of the righteousness of our belief ; we see that our opponent is equally sure of his. Who is right ? Where lies the truth ? The Truth, is to be found in the superior experience of the divine.

Therefore I hope I do not betray the thought of His Holiness if I stretch the idea out of the realm of Hinduism, and speak about the oneness of all religious experiences, when they bypass—without denying it—the particular beliefs of each religion in which bosom the experience takes place.

When we read in St. John of the Cross "God has spoken one Word only, His "Verb. He has spoken It in eternal "silence, and it is in silence that the soul "will hear it", do we not immediately think of Lord Sri Dakshinamurti, who teaches us in silence ?

When Ralph Emerson writes : "Nature "is the incarnation of a thought, which "will reverse into thought, as vapour and "ice reverts into water. The world is but "crystallized spirit", do we not think of the Upanishad, and could not these words have been spoken by Sri Adi Sankara, or Lord Buddha ?

"We want to be extinguished by Fire" "sayed the thirty birds (si morg)......The "Sun of Proximity directed his rays on "them, and their souls went shining...... "Then, reflected in their own faces, the "si morg (thirty birds) contemplated the "Face of the Simorg. They were dumb-"founded. They doubted now, whether "they were still themselves or if they had "become the Simorg. If they looked "where the Simorg stood, they could see "He was there. If they looked at them-"selves, they saw the Simorg (mirrored "in them). And if they looked at both "sides at once, they could see that they "and the Simorg, they were one only "being. As they could not understand "what was happening, they asked the "Simorg to explain the great secret. Then "the Simorg answered : 'The Sun of my "Majesty is a mirror ; who wants to looks "into it, can see his soul and his body ... "when you have passed the spiritual "valley...........and have done good deeds,

" you have only done my action.........in " order to find yourselves in my Self.........' " Finally, the si morg (thirty birds) were " annihilated in the Simorg, the shadows " disappeared in the Sun ; and that " was all."

This little fable belongs to the persian Sufi Cheik Ferid Eddin Attar (1129-1230); but it could as well be a *purana.*

Bhakti for God is cried out in all accents :

Sri Ramana Maharshi, although constantly immersed in the pure Being, tenderly complaints :

" Entering my home and luring me, why didst Thou keep me prisoner in Thy heart's cave, O Arunachala ? Was it for Thy pleasure or for my sake Thou didst win me ? If now Thou turn me down, the world will blame Thee, O Arunachala !....................."

In his turn, Ibrahim Misri, the Egyptian Muslim (d. 856) complains to Allah :

" I die, without dying in me/The ardent love I have for Thee/And Thy love my only goal/Has not yet quenched the fever of my soul..........."

The triumphant voice of Sri Adi Sankara proclaims :

" Him do I cherish, the Lord of living creatures/The Almighty one, the Slayer of sin, who is adored by all/Within whose matted locks the Ganga wanders mourning/Him do I cherich..............."

Father Teilhard de Chardin, the great paleontologue and mystic echoes :" Glorious Christ.........You, whose brow is snow, whose eyes are fire, and whose feet are sparkling like gold. You, whose hands grasps the stars. It is You that my being was calling for, with an anciety as great as the Universe. You really are my God and my Lord !"

Being a Christian, Father Teilhard de Chardin believes in Soul and Matter. Nevertheless, he writes :" everything is being, there is nothing else than being everywhere, above the fragmentation* of creatures." And further on : " the pure heart is the heart who, loving God above all things, sees Him in everything †. Whether he plans higher than common creatures, or whether he bends his attention on the world, which must be perfectioned and conquered‡, he only thinks of God. For him, the objects have lost their superficial multiplicity.........The pure soul moves in the midst of an immense and superior unity."

In this superior unity, we must fix our eyes, all of us. Firmly believing that our religion will bring us all to the goal, with the help of the *guru*, if well and fully understood.

**i.e.*, multiplicity.

†This all embracing love has been so particularly enhanced by Saint Francis and Sri Ramakrishna.

††Is it not what His Holiness is doing, ceaselessly working for the perfectioning and the welfare of all people who are under this ray ?

THE ADVAITA VIEW OF LIBERATION

By

DR. R. BALASUBRAHMANIAN.

Liberation is the supreme end of human endeavour. According to Advaita Vedanta, liberation consists in the attainment of the right knowledge of the Self (*atman*). The Self is the sole reality. It is of the nature of unsurpassed bliss (*anandam*) and unconditioned consciousness (*vijnanam*). It is immutable (*aksharam*), trans-empirical, all (sarvam) and the otherless perfection of security (*abhayam*). But its real nature is veiled and the non-real sorrow which is *samsara* is projected on account of the perception of the illusory plurality of things which are related as causes and effects. Ignorance is the root cause of our pursuit of the non-real. The perception of the non-real world of diversity and the resultant attachment to it are responsible for the wanderings in the wilderness of *samsara*. That is why the condition of ignorance is rightly characterised as *samsara*. Ignorance is bondage and its removal is release. The removal of ignorance takes place when there is the realisation of the Self as the sole reality. Since the rise of the right knowledge itself is the removal of ignorance, release can be characterised either as the removal of ignorance (*avidyastamaya*) or as the attainment of the right knowledge (*vidya*)[1].

Is Knowledge the means to release ?

It is necessary to clear certain erroneous notions about liberation before we elucidate our standpoint. It is sometimes argued that knowledge is the means for the attainment of release. Various *sruti* texts are cited in favour of this view. The *Isavasya Upanishad*[2] says : " He attains life eternal through knowledge ". The *Chandogya Upanishad* declares : " He who has found out and who understands that Self obtains all worlds and all desires"[3]. These scriptural texts, it is claimed, purport to show that knowledge is the means through which release is attained. Knowledge itself is not release. If that were the case, the *Upanishad* would not have said that *moksha* is attained through knowledge. In so far as it maintains that knowledge is the means through which release is attained, the two are different, and they are related as cause and effect.

This way of conceiving *moksha* is not satisfactory. On this view, *moksha* would cease to be eternal, for it seeks to reduce *moksha* to the status of an effect, *sadhya*, brought into being by a cause. Anything that comes into being as an effect of a cause has a beginning ; and whatever has a beginning has an end. If *moksha* were to be an effect like a pot, it would cease to be eternal ; and if it is not eternal, it would be followed by the state of bondage. But *moksha* is an eternal condition characterised by the total absence of *samsara*. Therefore, the view that *moksha* is an effect brought into being by knowledge militates against its eternality.

1. Vide *The Brahmasiddhi* (Madras Govt. Oriental Series No. 4., 1937) edited by S. Kuppuswami Sastri, Part I, p. 119.

2. 11.
3. 8—7—1.

It might be suggested that *moksha* could be looked upon as an effect like annihilative non-existence (*pradhvamsabhava*). *Pradhvamsabhava* has a beginning, but no end. If *moksha* is treated as *pradhvamsabhava*, it is undoubtedly an effect ; nevertheless, it has no end. What this suggestion aims to show is that *moksha* is an effect without, however, ceasing to be eternal. This way of characterising *moksha* as an *abhava* is wrong. *Moksha* is *bhava-rupa ;* it is to be described positively as of the nature of incomparable and unsurpassable bliss. If any positive existent is an effect, it cannot escape the end; sooner or later it will be destroyed. It should be pointed out here that there is no contradiction between what we said about *moksha* earlier and what we are maintaining now. *Moksha* is a state in which there is the total absence of *samsara*. This description is negative. Though *moksha* is positive, we have resorted to the negative characterisation for the simple reason that *samsara* disappears at the advent of *moksha*, and that its removal is total and final. It is characterised negatively only in the figurative sense. There is, therefore, no contradiction between what we said earlier and what we now maintain.

Let us now consider another interpretation which seeks to show that *moksha* can be treated as an effect brought into being by a cause without any danger to its eternality. *Avidya* is the cause of bondage ; and the destruction of the cause of bondage is *moksha*. Its destruction is caused by knowledge. *Moksha*, that is to say *pradhvamsabhava*, though it is an effect, it is eternal like the destruction of a pot. This way of interpreting *moksha* is equally untenable. It is based upon the assumption that the destruction of *avidya* which is the cause of bondage is different from *vidya*, while it is not. Mandana equates the removal of ignorance (*avidya-nivrtti*) with Brahman-realisation (*vidya or tattva—jnana*)[4]. The rise of the right knowledge itself is the removal of *avidya*. It is, therefore, not different from *vidya* ; only if it is different, it can be the effect of *vidya*.

To remain in one's own state (*svarupa-sthiti*) is *moksha*. The *Upanishad* brings out this idea when it says : " Having reached the highest light, he becomes merged in his own true form."[5] If *moksha* is an effect, something that is brought into being by a cause, its nature cannot be what the *Upanishad* makes it out to be. What is accomplished cannot be of the nature of the Self which is eternal. *Moksha* is attained when the knower of the truth remains what he has always really been, *viz*., the eternal, self-luminious Brahman, remains, that is to say, in his own state. The view that *moksha* is an effect brought into being by a cause runs counter to the *Upanishadic* teaching.

Release is not going to Brahman after departing from the body.—Release, according to others, is the attainment of Brahman by the individual soul. Just as a person would go by a particular path in order to reach his destination, so also the individual soul departing from the body, takes to a particular path in order to reach Brahman. The individual soul will get release only when it reaches Brahman. There are *sruti* texts which seem to lend support to this view. It is said in the *Kathopanishad* : " A hundred and one are the arteries of the heart ; one of them leads up to the crown of the head. Going upward through that, one becomes immortal ; the others serve for going in various other directions."[6] The *Chandogya Upanishad* says : " When he thus departs from this body, he goes upwards these very rays..............As his mind is failing, he goes to the sun. That verily is the gateway of the world...................."[7] A passage in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* reads : " Those who know this as such and, those too who meditate with faith in the forest on the truth, pass into the light , from the light into the day, from the day into the half month of the waxing moon..........."[8] These *sruti* texts, it is claimed, which describe the course after death make it clear how the individual soul, after departing from the body, goes by a certain path, reaches Brahman and attains immortality. Depending on the authority of these texts, it is argued that liberation consists in the attainment of Brahman by the individual soul proceeding along a particular path after death.

This way of conceiving *moksha* is untenable. It is intelligible to say that a person reaches his destination by proceeding along a particular path. His destination, say a cer-

4. *The Brahmasiddhi*, p. 78.
5. *Chandogya Upanishad*, 8—12—2.
6. 2—3—16.
7. 8—6—5.
8. 6—2—15.

tain village, is away from him. Limited as it is in space, the person must move towards it from his place, if he wants to reach it. But the same does not hold good in the present case. There is no need for the individual to go by a certain path to reach Brahman, for the latter is all-pervading ; and if it is all-pervading transcending the limitation of space, it is always attained. Only if it is away from the individual by being restricted in a space, the latter, it could be said, should reach it by taking a particular path. There are *sruti* texts which refer to Brahman as all-pervading. The *Isavasya Upanishad* says : " It (Brahman) is within all this."[9] The *Mundaka Upanishad* speaks of Brahman as " eternal, all-pervading, omnipresent."[10] For another reason also this view is not satisfactory. The village which a person wants to reach is different from him. Only if he proceeds along a certain path, he can reach it. Whereas the person is different from the village which he wants to reach, the *jiva,* is not different from Brahman which is to be attained. On the other hand, the *jiva,* in its true form, is Brahman itself. Only if it is taken to be non-different from Brahman the *sruti* text which declares most emphatically that " when verily the Self is.............. known, then all this is known"[11] will be significant. If the two are different, the knowledge of the one will not entail the knowledge of the other. The non-difference of the *jiva* and Brahman is brought out directly by the *Upanishad* when it says " That art thou."[12]

Release is not absorption in Brahman.—According to another view, release consists in the individual soul losing its identity and merging itself in Brahman. This point will be clear, if we consider certain examples. The rivers which flow into the sea lose their identity and separate individuality by becoming one with it. They merge in the sea and become the sea itself. Bees prepare honey by collecting the juices of different flowers and reducing them into one essence. The juices of different flowers lose their identity as soon as they are mixed to form one essence. The different juices are not seen with their distinguishing marks in the one essence which is a blend of different juices. In the same way, the *jiva* merges in Brahman and loses its identity. When it merges in Brahman in such a way that it cannot be discriminated from Brahman, it attains release. The authority of *sruti* texts is invoked in support of this view. Uddalaka Aruni instructs his son Svetaketu in the following way. He says : " Just as, my dear, the bees prepare honey by collecting the juices of different trees and reducing them into one essence ; and as these possess no discrimination (so that they might say) ' I am the essence of this tree, I am the essence of that tree,' even so, indeed, my dear, all these creatures though they reach the Being do not know that they have reached it. " " These rivers, my dear, flow the eastern towards the east, the western towards the west..............They become the sea itself. Just, as these rivers which do not know 'I am this one', 'I am that one,' in the same manner whatever they are in the world that they become"[13].

Even this view of *moksha* cannot stand examination. It proceeds on the assumption that the *jiva* and Brahman are different, while they are not. We can talk about the rivers which flow into the sea becoming one with it, when they merge in it, or the different juices losing their identity in the one essence to which they are reduced, since the two—the rivers and the sea or the different juices and honey—are different. But Brahman is not different from the *jiva,* but is identical with it. If they are different, we can talk about the latter merging in the former and losing its identity. Since they are non-different, the very idea of the one merging in the other is meaningless. There is also another reason to show that this view is absurd. It is possible to say that two things possessing form and parts get mixed with each other, losing their individual distinguishing marks. The Self or Brahman has no form and parts. The *Upanishad* declares that the self is " without parts, without activity "[14]. The very conception, then, of the *Jiva* becoming one with Brahman by losing its form and parts is meaningless.

Attaining the causal condition of Brahman by jiva is not release.—Some others conceive of *moksha* in a different way. The individual soul comes forth from Brahman : for *sruti* declares that " as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this Self come forth.........all beings "[15] The *jiva* that is to say, is the effect of Brahman. It attains

9. 5.
10. 1—1—6.
11. *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad.* 4—5—6.
12. *Chandogya Upanishad,* 6—8—7.
13. *Chandogya Upanisad,* 6-9-1-2, 6-10-1-2.
14. *Svetasvatara Upanishad,* 6—19
15. *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad,* 2—1—20.

release when it acquires the conditions of its cause, *viz.*, Brahman from which it has come forth. In support of this view, a text from the *Mundaka Upanishad* is cited : " Being a knower, shaking off good and evil and free from stain he attains supreme equality with the Lord "[16] Release is, therefore, the attainment of the condition of Brahman, which is the cause, by *jiva* which is its effect. This view also does not stand to reason. The effect is always of the nature of its material cause. If so, the *jiva* is always of the nature of Brahman from which it has come forth. Since the *jiva* is always of the nature of Brahman, it is meaningless to say that it must attain the condition of its cause. Only if it is different from Brahman, can we say that it acquires the nature of Brahman which is its material cause and thereby attains release. In so far as it is not different from it, the nature of Brahman is always attained.

Release is not transformation of jiva into Brahman.—According to another view, the *jiva* should undergo transformation and become Brahman to attain release. Just as a person transforms himself into a tiger by means of the *yogic* powers, which he has developed, so also the *jiva* changes itself into the form of Brahman. *Sruti* itself speaks of such a transformation of the *jiva* into Brahman. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says : " He, verily, who knows the Supreme Brahman becomes Brahman himself."[17] The transformation of the *jiva* into Brahman, is, therefore, release. This view also like the earlier ones cannot bear examination. The term " transformation " signifies that one thing becomes another. When a thing undergoes transformation, it changes into something quite different from the one it was previously. A person who is an adept in yogic practices transforms himself into the form of a tiger ; he assumes a new form which is different from the one which he had previously. Transformation indicates that the thing which undergoes change and the object into which it is changed are different. Since the *jiva* is not different from Brahman. it is wrong to speak of the transformation of the *jiva* into Brahman. Further, whatever object undergoes transformation will acquire new characteristics which serve to distinguish it from its previous condition. Brahman is of the nature of consciousness and as such is not different from the *jiva* whose real nature is also consciousness. The *jiva* which is supposed to change into Brahman does not differ from it at all.

It may be argued that there is a vital difference between the *jiva* and Brahman. Even though the *jiva* like Brahman, is of the nature of consciousness, it differs from the latter in one important respect. It is subject to grief and delusion, while Brahman transcends all these. When the *jiva* changes into Brahman, there is the absence of grief and delusion in that condition. Thus the condition of the *jiva* is different from that of Brahman and we can, it may be argued, without any inconsistency talk about the transformation of the one into the other. This argument is untenable. The critics should be asked whether the *jiva* by its very nature is subject to grief and delusion or not. If it be said that the *jiva* by its very nature is consumed with grief and is afflicted by delusion, it can never get rid of them. If they constitute its nature, they can never be destroyed and the *jiva* will always be subject to them. If, on the other hand, they are treated as characteristics foreign to its nature, they cannot stick to it as permanent possessions ; they will disappear of their own accord, and no special effort need be taken to remove them.

Release is the realisation of the nature of the self.—So far we examined several views of *moksha* and all of them are erroneous. Release is not something to be accomplished through the agency of a cause. It does not signify the attainment of Brahman by the *jiva* proceeding along a particular path after departing from the body. It does not consist in the merging of the *jiva* in Brahman by losing its identity. The attainment of the condition of Brahman which is the cause by the *jiva*, which is the effect, is not even release . Nor does release mean the transformation of the *jiva* into Brahman. According to Advaita, the realisation of the true nature of the Self is release. The Self or Brahman which is non-dual is of the nature of knowledge, bliss, and existence. It is ever-free ; it is of the nature of eternal release. But its real nature is missed due to *avidya*. The *jiva* is Brahman itself. It is on account of the limiting adjuncts that it appears to be different from it. Birth and death, finitude and limitation do not belong to it, for it is of the nature of Brahman which is infinite and immutable unborn and homo-

16. 3—1—3.

17. 3—2—9.

geneous, but they pertain to the psycho-physical complexes, which make for finitude and limitation and which are, therefore, non-atman and non-real. Attachment to the non-real is responsible for desire, sorrow, and suffering. And the root cause of all these is *avidya* which obscures the real nature of the *jiva*. The obscuration is removed through knowledge. When the veil which covers the truth falls off at the onset of knowledge, the *jiva* shines, in its own true form, as the real, as knowledge, and as the infinite, in the same way as a crystal (*sphatika*) shines in its own true form when the *japa* flower which is responsible for the red colour which it has assumed is removed from its vicinity. The crystal by itself is not red ; but it appears to be red when it is kept against the *japa* flower which is red. What its true nature is cannot be known so long as it is kept against the red background provided by the flower. The flower not only conceals the real nature of the crystal, but also makes it appear red. No sooner is it removed from the vicinity of the crystal the red colour of the crystal disappears and the crystal shines in its own true form. When the flower is removed, the crystal remains what it has always really been ; it has not attained a new form. When *avidya* which has been obscuring the true nature of the *jiva* disappears at the onset of *vidya* , the *jiva* shines in its respondent glory and supernal excellence ; the knower of the truth remains what he has always really been—the eternal, free, self-luminous Brahman.

Brahmaprapti or the attainment of Brahman is said to be release. Since the *jiva* is of the nature of the eternal, free, self-luminous Brahman, what is required for *brahmaprapti* is just the knowledge of the truth. The *jiva* should realise its true nature by destroying the false belief in the psycho-physical complexes which serve to limit and particularise it. When the false belief which is *avidya* is destroyed, release is said to be attained by the knower of the truth. For release what is needed is the knowledge of the truth and nothing else.

If release signifies the realisation of one's real nature, how can it be said to be originated or brought into being ? We can throw light on this question by considering an example. The dirt which has settled upon the cloth does not allow it to appear in its white colour. When it is removed, the cloth shines in its original colour and we say : " The cloth has *become* white ". Here there is no origination of a new colour. The cloth was white even earlier. But still we say that it has become white as if it was not white previously. In the same way, the knower of the truth gives up the notion of the identity of the self with the body, etc., and becomes Brahman himself. A passage in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* reads : " Being Brahman, he attains Brahman."[18] If release is not interpreted as realising one's real nature, realising what one has always been, the expression " being Brahman " (*brahmaiva san*) would be void of meaning.

18. 4—4—6.

SECTION II

SHAN-MATAS

(THE SIX SUB-FAITHS OF HINDUISM)

समस्तलोकशङ्करं निरस्तदैत्यकुञ्जरं दरेतरोदरं वरं वरेभवक्त्रमक्षरम् ।
कृपाकरं क्षमाकरं मुदाकरं यशस्करं मनस्करं नमस्कृतां नमस्करोमि भास्वरम् ॥

I offer my salutations to the Splendrous Supreme Imperishable One, Who is elephant-faced and pot-bellied; Who does good to all the worlds; Who destroyed the demon Gajamukha; the merciful, forgiving Lord Who bestows bliss and glory on those who worship Him, and also makes them good at heart.

Thus is extolled Ganapati, by Sri Sankara Bhagavadpada in his *Ganesa Pancharatna.* It is significant that Sankara calls Ganapati Himself as "Sankara" in this sloka. "Sankara" etymologically, is One who does good. Acharya Sankara is extolled as *Sankaram, loka Sankaram,* "Sankara who did good to the world." When offering praise to Ganapati, Sankara adds the word 'Samasta' and says *Samastra loka Sankaram* — "One who does good *to all the worlds*", which means that Ganapati is not only the gracious God of the Ganapatas, who worship Him in the name and form of Ganapati, but of the entire humanity. Sankara knew the One and Only God alone, Who is for the entire universe, and Whose manifestations the different Divinities are. Whichever Divinity he sings is the Supreme God to him, and so is Ganapati.

Sankara moves us, when in his encounter with the Ganapatyas he waxes eloquent on the greatness of Ganapati as *Suddha-buddha-mukta-Svarupa,* i.e., as of the nature of Pure Consciousness and Liberation (*Anandagireeya*).

(*Picture*: Ganapati installed by Sankara before Akhilandesvari in Tiruvanaikka)

Photograph: VISVANATH

GANAPATYAM

(THE FAITH OF GANAPATI.)

All ancient manuscripts, whether written on palm leaves or any other material, commenced with salutations to Lord Ganapati, "Sri Ganaadhipataye Namah". From the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, Hindus worship Vinayaka at the commencement of every auspicious ceremony. In Tamil Nadu, in particular, almost every street has a temple for Vinayaka, and while travelling from one place to another, you cannot miss seeing the image of Vinayaka, installed either in a temple or a niche, or under a peepul tree. All these show the great significance attached to this elephant-faced deity in our religious thought.

In Tamil Nadu, this deity has come to be known as Pillaiyar, because, he is the pillai *or son of the Parents of the Universe, Parvati-Parameswara. When you begin to contemplate upon this particular manifestation of the Divine,* tattvas *or religious principles come to mind in an unending stream. Though His body is of gigantic proportions, He is yet a child. Every mother likes to feed her child well so that he may grow up plumpy and healthy. That is why Pillaiyar is contemplated as a voracious eater, fond of all nice things. He is essentially an object of affection for children, who take delight in playing at* yaanai *(elephant) imitating the gait of the elephant. It is paradoxical that with such a massive body, Ganapati should have chosen the tiny mouse as His* vahana *or vehicle. It is said that He sat on the mouse as light as a cork. This conception of Vinayaka riding a mouse is illustrative of the Vedantic truth that God alone matters and that all other external paraphernalia are illusions. The pride of an elephant is in its tusks, and it takes care to keep them bright and sharp. But Vinayaka broke one of his tusks to write* Mahabharata, *demonstrating that no personal sacrifice is too much in the cause of spreading the knowledge of Truth,* dharma *and* jnana.

The Tamil Saint, Avvayar wrote 'Vinayakar Ahaval', explaining how Vinayaka is the embodiment of Yoga Sastra, with all its aims and implications.

अगजाननपद्मार्कं गजाननमहर्निशम् ।
अनेकदं तं भक्तानां एकदन्तमुपास्महे ॥

*This is a familiar prayer verse addressed to Vinayaka. Agaja is the Divine Mother, Parvati, daughter of the mountain, Himavan. At the sight of Her beloved child, Vinayaka, Sri Parvati's face beams with joy, even as the lotus blossoms at the first rays of the sun. For the lotus face of Sri Parvati, Vinayaka is the sun. For His devotees, Vinayaka showers benefits generously—*bhaktaanaam anekadam. *He has only one tusk—*ekadantam. *The devotee says that he is worshipping that elephant-faced Vinayaka, who is the beloved son of Agaja, etc.*

*We offer our obeisance to Vinayaka by putting '*Thoppikkaranam*'. In this method of salutation, we catch our left ear with the right hand and the right ear with our left hand and kneel down. This we repeat a number of times. 'Thoppikkaranam' is a corruption of 'Dorbih Karnam Griheetva'. Vishnu is stated to have offered this form of salutation to make Vinayaka laugh and throw out the discus* (chakram), *which He was keeping concealed in His mouth.*

The manifestation of Vinayaka embodies the high philosophic tattva *of the functioning of the Universe as mere sport of God.*

—H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI.

GANAPATI

By

" SANKARA KINKARA ".

मुदा करात्तमोदकं सदा विमुक्तिसाधकं
कलाधरावतंसकं विलासिलोकरक्षकम् ।
अनायकैकनायकं विनाशितेभदैत्यकं
नताशुभाशुनाशकं नमामि तं विनायकम् ॥
(श्रीशङ्कराचार्याः)

I bow to Vinayaka — above whom there is no greater authority — who holds the sweet *modaka* in his hand, who is ever conferring the Bliss of Liberation on His devotees, Who wears the crescent on His forehead, Who is resplendent with His protecting power enveloping the Universe, Who is the refuge of the forlorn, Who destroyed the demon with the elephant form, and Who is all agile in destroying the sorrows of those who worship Him. (Sri Sankaracharya : *Ganesa Pancharatna*)

The Ganapatas, those who worship Ganapati as the Supreme Brahman, claim a distinction for themselves—and quite justifiably so—in that they have no need to worship any other Divinity, whereas even exclusive adherents of other Divinities have to propitiate Ganapati at the commencement of any rite.

There is no *puja*, no *yajna*, no *japa* without offering prayers to Ganapati, to begin with. For He is the remover of all obstacles, and so claims worship first when any endeavour is undertaken. Rightly therefore the Ganapatas recite this *sloka* at the commencement of any undertaking :

सर्वेषामादिपूज्योऽयं सर्वादौ वेदवादतः ।
अग्रपूज्यत्वभावेन पूजयेद्गणनायकम् ॥

For millenniums, millions and millions of people have been launching on any enterprise with the prayer :

शुक्लांबरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ।
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये ॥

and cuffing the head five times as they utter the five names of Ganapati शुक्लांबरधरं (He who is attired in pure white), विष्णुं (the All-prevalent), शशिवर्णं (He who is of the cool, pure hue of the moon), चतुर्भुजं (the four-armed) and प्रसन्नवदनं (Whose gracious face is beaming with smile). The *sloka* enjoins that Ganapati should be meditated upon for the cessation of all impediments.

Vighnesvara, one of the common names of Ganapati, literally means the Lord of Obstacles—not the Lord who quells obstacles, in which case the name should be Vighnaghnesvara. This name signifies that He is at once the creator of obstacles and also the destroyer of them. He creates obstacles only in order that people do not become egotistic, but think of God humbly. When so thought of, He himself removes the impediments.

There is a theory that originally Ganapati was only a malevolent minor God creating

obstacles, and that He was the Lord of the Bhuta ganas ; hence the name Ganapati.

Sri Sankara himself refers to Him in this aspect as the leader of the Bhutas in his *Gita Bhashya* (प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः). The Baudhayana Dharma Sutra too speaks of Ganapati as a fierce spirit creating obstacles. But the hue of the moon, the beaming gracious face and the pure white garment are poles apart from this Lord of the fierce spirits. Just as *Sri Rudra-Sukta* speaks of the twin aspects of Siva, the one auspicious and the other grisly—Ganapati too has the twin aspects of creating obstacles and destroying them. He might have been, once upon a time, a fierce, minor village God (and so a God of primitive cult) as the name *pratigramadhidaivata** signifies ; but there is no doubt that He had become an important benevolent God in the Hindu pantheon since very early times.

The earliest reference we have about Ganapati is in Rg. Veda II 23.1 :

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे
कविं कवीनां उपमश्रवस्तमम् ।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आनः
शृण्वन्नूतिभिस्सीदसादनम् ॥

But it is said that the deity who is spoken of as the Chief of the Celestial Host (Ganapati) here is Brahmanaspati, who has nothing to do with the later-day elephant-faced Ganapati. Anyhow, most of the epithets applied here to Brahmanaspati are particularly apposite to the elephant-faced God : *e.g.* कविं कवीनां (the Seer of seers or Poet of poets, Ganapati being the God of Wisdom *par excellence*) and ज्येष्ठराजं (the King of Kings commanding precedence over others).

We get the unmistakable reference to the elephant face in *Taittireeya Aranyakam* which speaks of God as 'Dantin' (the Tusker). This very word 'Dantin' occurs in the Gayatri sacred to Ganapati—तन्नो दन्तिः प्रचोदयात् : *Let that Tusker direct our thoughts.*

Whatever the proto-historic status of Ganapati, by the time of the *Itihasas*, He has become the Benignant God beyond whom there is no overlord—Vinayaka.

By and by Ganapati became an important Divinity of the Hindu Pantheon, while He became the Supreme One for the Ganapatas. *Ganapati Upanishad, Heramba Upanishad, Bhargava Puranam* (otherwise called *Vinayaka Puranam*), the Ganesa Mahatmya portion of *Skandam*, Ganesa Kanda in *Brahma Vaivarta Puranam, Mudgala Puranam, Ganesa Gita, Ganesa Tantra, Ganesa Kalpa* and *Ganesachara Chandrika* are the basic texts of Ganapatas.

Every cult extols its own Presiding Deity as the Supreme One, the other Deities taking a secondary place. But there is a special justification in the Ganapatya cult averring Ganapati as the Supreme, in that He alone is pre-eminently the Embodiment of Pranava, which is the subtlest form of Brahman *viz*. Sound. The elephant-faced Ganapati is almost a figure ca ved out of the letter denoting Omkara or Pranava.

Sound is the Primordial Manifestation of the Absolute. Bible also says "In the beginning was the word". Naturally Ganapati who is *Pranava* is worshipped whenever any enterprise is begun.

Ganapati, the God of Sound is appropriately enough extolled in the raga Hamsadhvani by Shri Muthuswami Dikshita ('Vatapi Ganapatim'). Hamsa is not only the swan, but the natural sound ever immanent in sentient beings. *Jnana-Siddhi Agama* speaks of Ganapati as *Kundali-Hamsa - Nisvanah.*

The Supreme Brahman is always spoken of as beyond the sexes. Ganapati with His right tusk broken, represents the female principle by his right half and the male principle by his left half. If Siva in his *Ardhanarisvara* form combines in him both the sexes, so too the ten-armed Maha Ganapati represents both, the five hands of His one half holding the insignias of the Gods Vishnu, Siva, Manmatha, Varaha and Himself, those of the other half holding those of their respective consorts Lakshmi, Parvati, Rati, Bhoodevi and Vallabha.

The Supreme Brahman is both man and animal—so too, Ganapati has the limbs of man and the face of an animal.

The Supreme Brahman as the Self of the individual soul is the overlord of the multitude of sensory perceptions, and the very name Gana-pati may be taken to denote this lordship over this multitude, though the *Puranas* would have it that He is Chief of the Bhutas of His father Siva, just as his

* 370th Name in *Maha Ganapati Sahasranama*

younger brother, Skanda is the Chief of the host of Devas (Deva Sena-pati). Both these are referred to as aspects of Siva Himself in the *Rudra Sukta* as *Ganebhyo Ganapatibhyascha* and *Senabhyah Senanibhyascha.*

The father-son relationship between Siva and Vinayaka takes us down to the Purana days, when the primigenial Jyeshta Raja came to be regarded as the elder son of Siva and Parvati.

There are numerous accounts of Ganapati's advent. The most beautiful and elevating account we have is in *Skanda Puranam.* Mother Parasakti, the Power of the Absolute, was enjoying the *Chitra Sala* (portrait gallery) in Kailasa. Her eyes were pitched on the letter 'Aum' (ॐ) written at the centre of the gallery. When this sign of the Primordial Sound was sighted by Parasakti, the letter itself which resembles a tusker with a crescent on it, assumed the resplendent divine form of Ganapati, donning the crescent of His Head.

According to *Kanchi Purana*, both Siva and Sakti were enjoying the portraits when suddenly Siva fixed his look on the letter '*A*' in 'Aum' and Sakti on 'u'. '*A*' became a bull elephant and 'u' a cow elephant. The two united and became Ganapati.

Yet another version is that Siva looked at the *Samashti Pranava* (that which is the aggregate) and Sakti at the *Vyashti Pranava* (in which individual attributes are manifested). As they looked, the power of the two forms of Pranava united and gave rise to Ganapati's incarnation.

These accounts are slightly modified in the popular story that Devi Parasakti Herself assumed the form of a she-elephant, and Siva that of a male-elephant, and out of their union was born Ganapati. Gnanasambandha refers to this in his Tiruvalivalam Tevaram (பிடியதன் உரு உமை கொள, etc.)

The most popular story about Vinayaka's *avatar* is to be found in *Matsya Purana.* Devi was on her way to bath. Her attendants told her that they should have a guard of their own and should not depend on Siva's watches Nandi and Bhrngi. Devi thereupon gathered the dirt off her body, and this mass assumed the form of a guard. Then placing him at the entrance of the gynaecium, Devi and Her attendants went to take bath. Siva came there and the guard prohibited Siva from entering into the bathing ghat quite unaware that it was Siva, and that Siva was inseparable from Devi. Siva too, quite unaware that the guard was created by His own Consort got wild and plucked his head off.

Coming out of the ghat, Devi was horrified to see Her guard murdered, his head severed from body. She took it as a personal affront to Her and fell out with Siva.

Siva, who could not bear His spouse's anger went out to find a substitute head for the truncated body of the guard. He saw an elephant lying with its head placed to the North which was inauspicious to the world. So he cut off the elephant's head and had it fixed to the truncated body of the guard, who rose up as Ganapati.

Yes, He was made Gana-pati, the Guard of guards at Kailas.

This story is often considered puerile for it is contended that Vinayaka who is the purest among the pure, could not have issued out of dirt; and that, as a matter of fact, there could be no dirt on the body of Devi, whose very form is composed of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss. But whoever can deny that this world of ours with all its physical and mental dirt is also part of Her sport ? In a way, our own birth is out of dirt. Perhaps, Vinayaka's manifestation out of dirt is a pointer to us that even we, dust or dirt as we are, could with effort realise the Wisdom that Vinayaka personifies.

Siva Purana tells a different story. Devi made a clay doll of a child, and Her very touch automatically breathed life into it. But the planet Saturn's evil eye fell on the boy and so his head was severed from body. Devi became utterly sad. Thereupon Siva sent out His messengers to get a suitable head for the torso and so on and so forth.

These different versions are explained by the belief that in each aeon the same basic events of the universe repeat themselves with certain changes every time. That is why the *Vinayaka Puranam* itself gives five different accounts of Ganapati's advent.

According to one of them, after the deluge, Siva incarnated Himself as Ganesa and created the universe afresh. Another story goes to say that the Sage Kapila who lost his precious gem Chintamani did penance propitiating Siva, at the instance of Mahavishnu, and that Siva sent forth Ganapati who remained unmanifest till then—to find out the gem. Ganapati did accordingly. One of the many forms of Vinayaka is appropriately called 'Chintamani Ganapati.'

Many Rshis have done penance to beget the gods and goddesses as their children. In this way, Ganapati took *avatars* as the son of the Saints Bhrgu and Kasyapa. It is Bhrgu who wrote *Vinayaka Puranam*, which is also known after its author as *Bhargava Puranam*.

Yet another episode in this Puranam : Kamalasura hid the Vedas underneath the seas. Brahma, losing His guide-book was at a loss to continue creation. He did penance to get the Supreme's aid. The Supreme was pleased with Brahma's penance, took the form of Ganapati with ten hands, did short work of Kamalasura and got back the Vedas to guide Brahma. This ten-armed Ganapati is called Maha Ganapati or the Great Ganapati.

Ganapati takes four different forms in the four Yugas.

He is said to be ten-armed and lustrous as flame with the lion for his mount in the Krta Yuga - when He goes by the name Vinayaka. He is six-armed, and pure white complexioned in Treta Yuga, when He rides on the peacock and is therefore called Mayuresa. The *Bhargava Puranam* tells us that Devi begot Mayuresa in immaculate conception, as a result of her constant *japa* of the single syllabled *mantra* of Ganapati into which Siva Himself initiated Her. He is also called Bhalachandra Vinayaka, since He wears the crescent on His forehead. The sacred day of this avatar is given as the Sarad Rtu, Sravana, Purva Paksha Chaturti, Visaka Nakshatra, Simha Lagna, and Somavara (Monday). Maryuresa is the presiding deity in Mayuragrama (Morgaon), the Great Ganapati kshetra in Maharashtra. But the image there is neither seated on peacock nor is it six-armed.* Vinayaka is four-armed in Dvapara Yuga. (Though this is Kali Yuga, even now, the vast majority of the Vinayaka images are four-armed only). This four-armed Ganapati of Dvapara Yuga, known as Gajanana is seated on a mouse and He is crimson coloured. In the Kali Yuga, He goes by the name Dhumraketu and in keeping with the name, He is of the colour of smoke, has just two arms, and rides a horse.

The Vinayaka form we usually see in the numerous temples, is according to Agama, Sri Kantha Rudra Kumara Vinayaka—that is, Vinayaka seated on a mouse with four arms carrying a noose, a goad, the broken tusk and the sweet *modaka*. He is in charge of the gross world of nature. He derives His power from Suddha Vidya Tattva Vinayaka, who is of the nature of pure Knowledge, and who in turn draws His power from Isvara Tattva Vinayaka or the One who symbolises the principle of the Supreme Siva-hood. This Isvara Tattva Vinayaka is inseparable from Siva and is the Supreme *Sound* which is Silence (*pranava*).

In the grossest manifestation that He is worshipped usually, He is spoken of as having His origin in the dirt of Sakti, which is the reason for his charge over this illusory world.

But He is not a product of illusion, and even this most common form of Him typifies the five great functions (*panchakritya*) of Isvara : the noose which is the binding power signifies creation ; the sign of fearlessness in the hand holding the tusk, protection ; the goad, destruction ; the trunk which is the organ of touch and smell, the Great Deception of creation, protection and destruction; and the boon-giving sign of the hand holding *modaka*, Liberation from this Deception.

Apart from this, the broken tusk signifies that He is the cause of *samsara* devoid of the knowledge of its Origin, and so broken away from it, while the *modaka* symbolises the fulness of Brahman. The filling in this sweet pie is called Purna (fulness). So at once Vinayaka stands for the brokenness of worldly life and the Fulness of Life Eternal.

The very sight of Vinayaka with the pot-belly and the elephant face, and holding the sweet delicious *modaka* infuses a spirit of utter contentment. It is the contentment born of the realisation that the innermost content of the individual is none other than the sweet fulness of Purna Brahman.

His lustrous form of the hue of Sindhura glitters all the more as the ichor exudes out of his cheeks, neck and privities. The three ichors signify aesthetic knowledge, spritual knowledge and knowledge that is Existence.

Even incongruous elements are perfectly resolved in him. *E.g.* though elephant-faced

*Around Morgaon we have shrines for the surrounding deities also exactly as in the order described by *mantra sastra*. Mayuresa is one among the eight Ganapatis—*Ashta Vinayakas*—in Maharashtra, the others being Sri Chintamani (of Theoorgaon), Sri Vighneshvar (of Ozargaon), Sri Vinayak (of Madgaon), Sri Ballaleshvar (of Paligaon), Sri Ganapati (of Ranjangaon), Sri Girijatmak (of Junner) and Sri Siddhi Vinayak (of Siddhatekgaon).

He Himself bears the goad and noose which control and bind the elephant ; because He is not the arrogant spirit like the elephant in rut (about which Sankara prays हृदय मदेभं बधान चिद्यन्त्रैः), but the Elephant of Enlightenment.

Vinayaka is above all the great Brahmacharin—celebate God. Though we have representations of His consorts (Vallabha, Nila Sarasvati, Siddhi and Buddhi), popular conception of Him is that of a Brahmacharin. Sankaracharya too says in the *Saundaryalahari*, that both Ganapati and Subrahmanya ever remain celebate because they have tasted of the milk (of wisdom) of the Divine Mother. He presides over Muladhara (the solar plexus at the base of the spinal column) and so His Upasana prevents the wasting of the primal source of energy (Kundalini) coiled in Muladhara.* He is the Great Celebate. Yet, with all His supreme control over the senses, He does not show the least trace of the vigour and austerity of the Yogi. He is the ever pleasant child—His conquest of lust is as natural and easy as that of the child. Kundalini is usually represented as a coiled serpent in the Muladhara. In Ganesa we see this serpent outwardly as the belt tightly binding His otherwise sagging huge belly of beauty (Sarpabharana Ganapati) or as the sacred thread (Naga Yajnopavita Ganapati) on his broad chest resembling the cascade in a mountain.

According to adherents of Ganapatyam, His very name is indicative of the Highest: *Ga* - going (into the world of Knowledge); *na* - the End (of this Knowledge) ; *pati* : the Lord (of both the Path and the End.)

Ganapati being the embodied Primordial Sound of Pranava, all the letters - 51 in number—are His manifestations ; and we have 51 forms of Him (अकरादिक्षकारान्त महा सरस्वतीमय-Sahasranama). Here we have very close affinity with the Sakti-religion which also speaks of all *varnas* as the Divine Mother's manifestations, in fact their very name is *matrka*†.

Out of these 51 forms, 32 are singled out for special worship : namely, 1. Bala Ganapati, 2. Taruna Ganapati, 3, Bhakta Ganapati, 4. Vira Ganapati, 5. Sakti Ganapati, 6. Dhvaja Ganapati, 7. Siddhi Ganapati, otherwise called Pingala Ganapati, 8. Ucchishta Ganapati, 9. Vighnaraja Ganapati, 10. Kshipra Ganapati, 11. Heramba Ganapati, 12. Lakshmi Ganapati, 13. Maha Ganapati, 14. Vijaya Ganapati, also called Bhuvanesa Ganapati, 15. Nrtta Ganapati, 16. Urdhva Ganapati, 17. Ekakshara Ganapati, 18. Vara Ganapati, 19. Tryakshara Ganapati, 20. Khsipra Prasada Ganapati, 21. Haridra Ganapati, 22. Eka Danta Ganapati, 23. Srshiti Ganapati, 24. Uddhanda Ganapati, 25. Rna-mochaka Ganapati, 26 Dundi Ganapati, 27. Dvimukha Ganapati, 28. Trimukha Ganapati. 29. Simha Ganapati, 30. Yoga Ganapati, 31. Durga Ganapati. and 32. Sankatahara Ganapati.

Even among these 32 forms, the first 16 are said to confer the highest bounties and they collectively go by the name "Shodasa Ganapatis." It speaks volumes of the Grace of Jagadguru His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Sri Padah, that he has installed these sixteen Ganapatis, two in each corner of an octogonal *mantapa* of chariot shape, in the Ramesvara Sankara Mandapa, which is an epitome of all the wealth that our Vedas and Puranas contain.‡ In the *vimana* of this *mandapa* are also depicted sages deeply devoted to Vignesvara, like Ganaka, Mudgala, who are the Rshis for Ganapati *mantras*. Here there is also a replica of the Gavaksha (window) of Tiruvalanchuzhi, which is spoken of as one of the four inimitables of our temple architecture. Centrally amidst the Shodasa Ganapatis is installed a Ganapati who faces the seas—Thus a 'gana' of Ganapatis (a Host of the Lord of Hosts) is installed here!

* गुदाद् द्व्यङ्गुलमूर्ध्वं तु लिङ्गादेकाङ्गुलादयः । मूलाधारत्रिकोणाभं चतुर्दलसरोरुहम् ॥
व-श-ष-साक्षरे युक्तं लसदोङ्कारकर्णिकम् । तत्रस्थं वल्लभीरम्यं गणेश्वरमुपास्महे ॥

(I meditate upon Ganesa, who gladdens His consort Vallabhi, seated in the triangle in Muladhara, within the pranava-pericarped four-petalled lotus, the four petals inscribed with the four letters Va-Sa-Sha and Sa)

† It is quite a different thing that Ganapati is depicted as being at the head of the Sapta matrkas (seven Mothers), as in Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchi. This shows His earlier conception as the leader of Hosts, not strictly benevolent. Names 55-62 of *Maha Ganapati Sahasranama* speak of His lordship over each of the seven Mothers and also of Mahalakshmi, whose parts they are. One of the many forms of Him is Durga Ganapati and Durga is essentially the Empress of the seven Mothers.

‡ Photographs reproduced in this volume.

The descriptions of these Ganapatis—some of them notably—are highly evocative of our spiritual and poetic instincts. There is an element of strangeness, almost weirdness, in some of them. We see Him differently as the valorous one, the wise one, the young one, the artistic one and so on.

Though usually we see Ganapati with either a fruit or the *modaka* in only *one* of his four hands, Bala Ganapati holds a banana, mango, jack fruit and sugarcane in his four hands, while in the grip of His trunk we also see the *modaka*. Naturally, He is the child (Bala). He signifies fertility and freshness. Ganapati is especially the God who infuses green into arid lands as the name ' Khalvatabhumisamrakshaka ' (*Sahasranama*) shows. Immediately next, He is extolled as the Healer of mental aridness (*Khalavata buddhi bheshaja*) In fact, among the Gods and Goddesses compacting Maha Ganapati, one is Bhoodevi —Mother Earth. There are many forms of Ganapati represented with the ear of grain, sugarcane, wood-apple, guava, coconut, etc. The Lord of Fruition appropriately holds the very many fruits of which elephants are fond. We have also Ganapatis holding a bunch of flowers, and the twig of Kalpaka, etc. The pot-bellied one is a voracious eater ! We also see representations of Him with the pitcher of nectar, or pitcher of *payasa*, with the sweet-balls of sesame, *ladduka*, etc. (Pomegranate stands foremost among them, the piece of poetic creation it is. It is this pomegranate which has later assumed the two forms of *modaka*, which is almost man-made pomegranate and the *ratna-kalasa* or vessel of gems.)

On closer examination we see that He does not Himself consume these eatables. Never is His trunk represented as putting the fruit and other eatables, within His mouth. He just holds them. He is the ' other bird' of the Upanishad which has nothing to do with the fruits of action.

What a richness of colour we see amid the Ganapatis ! One is radiant-red as the rising sun (Bala). Another of pure white lustre like the Sun in mid-sky (Taruna). A third one shines like autumnal moon (Bhakta). Yet another is of the colour of gold with a tinge of green as the very name Pingala signifies. While Ucchishta Ganapati, who is the closest representation of the Formless Brahman, is spoken of as blue in complexion. We have it on record that the great Yati Seshadri Brahmam spoke of this blue as the most subtle blue and with the aspirant getting more and more immersed in this blue, it will be seen as pure red. This is similar to the description of Sri Kamakshi Maha Tripurasundari as both black and red. In fact, there is much in common between Ucchishta Ganapati and Sri Kamakshi or Sri Vidya, of which more later.

Among the strange weapons, insignias and other things held by the various Ganapatis are a Vetala (vampire : Vira Ganapati with twenty hands), Vina and the beads reminding Sarasvati * (Ucchishta Ganapati with six hands : This Ucchishta Ganapati is anyhow different from the Ucchishta Ganapati, whose worship is considered to be the most supreme and most esoteric. This other Ucchishta Ganapati holds in His four hands, exactly like Shri Vidya, the noose, the goad, the bow of sugarcane and the arrow of flowers : सुमबाणेक्षु कोदण्डपाशाङ्कुशवरायुधः (*Sahasranama*,80); शरचापगुणाङ्कुशान् स्वहस्तैः or शरान् धनुः पाश सृणी स्वहस्तैः (*Dhyana sloka*). It may be noted that His consort's name is Nila *Sarasvati*.)

The description of Lakshmi Ganapati is highly poetic, holding as He does in his eight hands *plus* proboscis a parrot, a pomegranate, lotus, pitcher of rubies, goad, noose, the wish fulfilling creeper, sword and the sign of boon-giving. He shines with the liquefaction of nectarine flow (ज्योतिस्सुधानिर्झरः). As an excellent colour contrast ,on His two sides are seated His two consorts, each holding a blue lotus.

Variegated colours apart, His qualities are also variegated and He is, in the ultimate, beyond qualities. As the repository of all the excellent qualities, Ganesa once incarnated as *Gunesa* (Lord of good qualities).

Of the various forms of Ganapati Maha Ganapati has the largest number of *upasakas*. We have already seen how He represents both the male and the female principles. Shri Raghava Chaitanya's *Maha Ganapati Stotra* succinctly condenses what

* Ganapati, the "*Kavim-Kavinam*" has much in eommon with Sarasvati, the Goddess of Wisdom and Speech, as indicated by the names in His different *ashtottara satas* and *sahasranama*, like Vaniprada, Vakpati, Kavitakara. Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada speaks of literary equipment as one of the fruits of reciting his *Ganesa Pancharatna* (Susahitee) while in his *Ganesa Bhujangam*, he says : गणेश प्रसादेन सिद्ध्यन्ति वाचो : " Ganapati's grace confers the power of speech ".

all the *mantra sastras* have to say of Maha Ganapati and unfolds before us the divine form, abode and surroundings of this ten-armed Ganapati seated on a lion. Just as Vishnu has His abode in the Ocean of Milk and Devi in the Ocean of Nectar, Maha Ganapati has His abode in the Ocean of sugarcane juice, as He is the sweetest of the sweet, holding the *modak a.* It is the sweetness of the bliss of self-realisation and it is but meet that His abode is called Ananda (more precisely Svananda) Bhavana (or Bhuvana)—the Abode of the Bliss of Self. Svananda Bhavana is to Ganapatas what Kailas is to Saivas, Skandagiri to Kaumaras, Vaikuntha to Vaishnavas and Sripura to Saktas.

The ancillary and auxiliary deities and principles surrounding Ganapati in row after row in the various *avaranas* give us a sacred assemblage of the beings of bliss. Close to Ganapati on the four quarters are seated Vishnu with Lakshmi under the bilva tree to His front, Isvara with Devi under the banyan tree on Ganapati's right side, Manmata with Rati under the pipal tree to His back, and Varaha with Bhoodevi under the Priyangu tree on His left side.

In the centre is seated the Great Gracious Lord Ganapati, with His consort, Vallabha on his lap. He holds the insignias of the eight surrounding gods and goddesses in eight of His ten hands (Lotus of Lakshmi and disc of Vishnu; noose of Devi and trident of Siva; Utpala flower of Rati and Manmata's bow of sugarcane; the ear of paddy of Bhoodevi and the mace of Varaha), while in the other two He has His and His consort's insignias—pomegranate and the broken tusk.

There is in Him an obvious abandon from all this picturesque setting and the appurtenances for He is always meditated upon as the One in meditation. Though He is very much in a gala setting He is not of it, and is deeply in-drawn. What a soothing picture to troubled hearts—Maha Ganapati immersed in deep contemplation, nay, Realisation, while from the temples of this Symbol of Sweetness flows the ambrosia of ichor, whose fragrance invites a cluster of bees around Him. ! His huge ears which serve Him as whisks (चामर कर्ण) fan out the bees and also spread the sacred perfume of the ichor. He is hugged by Vallabha whose lotus hand holds a lotus.

Nrtta Ganapati is another of His captivating manifestations. He is the dear கூத்தாடும் பிள்ளையார் in many shrines of Tamilnadu. Ganapati's is the ecstatic dance of the great weight of seeing the entire universe within, for which the outward sign is the pot-belly.

Nrtta Ganapati wears rings in all His fingers which flash out in the movement of the hands, and anklets in His heavy feet. The magnificent dance of mammoth Ganapati is extolled in the very beginning of the Agaval by Avvaiyar.

The ringing notes of the jingling anklets
*In the lotus feet of sandal's coolth**

Shri Tyagaraja also sings of the sound of the anklets filling the ears as His weighty feet dance over the earth.

Adi Sankara too commences his Ganesa Bhujangam with a description of Ganapati's dance:

Hail Ganesh ! Son of Paramesh !
Who revels in the tinkle of the small bell
To the accompaniment of His feet marking time;
Whose belly is bound by the waist band of serpent
Lest it should sag in the ecstatic dance.

The reference to the small bell indicates the possibility of Sankara referring to Vichitra Tandava, in which one sees the dancer ringing a small bell as he dances. This Tandava is in vogue even today in Kerala, and in that way we have, perhaps an oblique internal evidence in this stanza indicating that the Great Acharya was of Kerala extraction.

The son of Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer, and the One who has actually entered into a dancing competition with His Father (see Bhargava Purana) Ganapati is also the God of music. Tyagaraja refers to Ganapati (Gajamukhulu) among *nadopasakas* in his song 'vidulaku'.

*சீதக்களபச் செந்தாமரைப் பூம்
பாதச்சிலம்பு பல இசை பாட

Sankara shows Ganapati as the supreme *rasika* enjoying unheard melodies.

The music of Vina over,
Ganadeesh is absorbed in the song of silence:
His face beams with the bliss of at-one-ment.
(Sloka 2, *Ganesa Bhujangam*)

Among the other forms of Ganapati we have, one is Ekakshara Ganapati—One-syllabled. He is the Vyashti Pranava which is responsible for showing up the world of plurality. He is all red; his colour, garment, garland, all are red. As Sri Kamakoti Sripadah said of Kamakshi, it is this infra red which is the least disturbing in the colour spectrum, causing all the other colours (of creation) to emanate from the colourless white purity (of Brahman).

Vara Ganapati, who is easily pleased, and ever willing to confer boons, is described as being red, three-eyed, with His head filled up with honey. It is the honey flowing out of the lotus of Sahasrara in the head, where Kundalini becomes one with the Absolute.

Ganapati is of the earth, but not earthy. He was created out of dust and dirt. His place is Muladhara—the principle of earth. We have an important shrine for Him in the Muladhara Kshetra of Tiruvarur, which was consecrated by Saint Agastya. But this lord of the basic plexus is also Lord of the ultimate *sahasrara*-a truth symbolised by the Vinayaka installed in the apex of the hill in Tiruchi : உச்சிப்பிள்ளையார்.The practice of cuffing one's head five times to propitiate Ganapati takes its origin from the Sahasrara Ganapati. Cuffiing one's head helps to shake the lotus of Sahasrara, so that the honey from it could drip throughout the human body.

Kshipra-Prasada-Ganapati, who is pleased by prayer then and there, bears behind other things a seat made of Darbha grass (विष्टर) which is a pointer to His Yogic qualities. The venerable Tamil Poetess Avvai's Agaval extols Vinayaka as the greatest Yogin.

It is said that one is absolved of his debts if he meditates on Ganapati as of crystalline form, donning a red garment and holding in his four hands the noose, goad, tusk and rose-apple (Rna-Mochaka).

Dundi Ganapati's divine *jnana* is indicated by the beads He holds. He has two celebrated shrines, one in Kasi and the other near Tiruchendur in the far South. Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada is said to have composed his Ganesa Pancharatnam before the Dundi Ganapati of the South.

Then we have Ganapatis with two, three, four and five faces (Dvimukha, Trimukha, Dhvaja and Heramba). Like Siva, Vinayaka too is depicted as five-faced in many kshetras. If we remember that the proportion of hands to head is 2: 1, Maha Ganapati with his ten-heads should naturally be five-faced.

Sankara sings in praise of Ganapati as an elephant loved by lion—Panchasya which also means the five-faced (Siva). But elephant Ganapati Himself is a Panchasya.

Simha Ganapati is a combination of the most gentle with the most ferocious. As his name indicates He carries a lion in his hand; but He holds also such sweet things as vina, the wishfulfilling creeper and cluster of blossoms. He is pure white. It is this whiteness that resolves the seeming incongruities.

The description of Yoga Ganapati infuses immense peace. He sits in the Yogic posture, with the knees tightly bound with Yoga-pattam. His is the colour of tender shoot. His garment is deep blue. He holds the sugarcane, noose and beads and the Yoga-danda in his four hands.

There is a custom prevalent in many houses of worshipping Sankata-hara Ganapati in the Chaturthi. His name denotes that He makes the impassable passable. He stands on a lotus, like the Sun-God and is ruddy like the rising sun. He holds the goad, sign of boon, noose and the vessel of *payasa* (milk porridge).

His consort, fresh and green, holds a blue flower.

Though we see Ganapati as decked with the crescent in most of these forms, the episode of His cursing the moon is very popular. Puffed with vanity at his beauty the Moon-god derided Vinayaka once. Thereupon Vinayaka pronounced a curse that any body who looked upon moon

would be subject to calumny. So the beautiful Moon-god did not have a single person to attend on him, or appreciate his beauty. He had no other go than taking refuge at Vinayaka's feet. The Merciful Lord attenuated the original curse considerably by modifying it this way—that He forbid people to see the moon on a single day, the sukla-paksha Chaturthi (the fourth day of the bright half of the lunar month, very auspicious to Vinayaka). Later Lord Krishna Himself was subjected to calumny because of having seen the moon on this day. The following sloka, recited to nullify the evil effect of seeing the moon on Sukla-Chaturthi refers to the Krishna-episode:

सिंह प्रसेनमवधीत् सिंहो जांबवता हतः ।
सुकुमार मा रोदीः तव ह्येष स्यमन्तकः ॥

Thus far, we have dealt with the various forms of Ganapati. He is usually worshipped as the four-handed one in an image of clay. As He is the incarnation of lowliness, He is also worshipped in a lump of cow-dung, turmeric powder etc. But the most sacred symbol in which He is worshipped is the Sona-bhadra stone, found in the river-bed of Son. It is a bright red stone, and though it has a form it is also formless in that it has no parts like eye, ears, hands etc.

Ganapati is primarily the God of joy, fun and frolic. He is Prasanna vadana; He is Vikata. His sixteen sacred names begin with 'Sumukha'-indicating His face beaming with love and His easy accessibility.

He is prasana-vadana, ever smiling. He was born, let us remember the Brahmanda Puranam episode, when the looks and smiles of Devi and Isvara united.

(कामेश्वरमुखालोक कल्पित श्रीगणेश्वरा)

So we see in the puranas numerous pranks of his boyhood, mostly reminiscent of the sports of Balakrishna.

He will suck in the whole of the ocean of milk and enjoy in all guilelessness the predicament of Vishnu who reclines on His serpent-couch in that ocean.

The great Sanskrit poet Rajasekhara sings that the playful elephant of Ganapati fills its trunk with water and then sprinkles it all around in ecstatic dance—when each droplet becomes a world, a planet, a star around Him.

The Puranas depict Ganapati as studding the Pole-discus with the stars and planets, and then wearing this in His neck as a pendant.

He is especially fond of annoying Vishnu —who is none other than His maternal uncle. Vishnu, who lost His conch panchajanya in a battle with a demon, got it back by propitiating the Ganapati with His trunk turned to the right (வலம்புரி) in Kanchi. But on another occasion, Vinayaka Himself hid the discus of Vishnu in His mouth. This was when Vishnu came to Kailasa on a birthday of Ganapati, without any gift. Vishnu knew that he could not get the disc back by threatening Ganapati, and that He could be made to yield only by a trick. So Vishnu pinched his ears by His four hands, and knelt down and rose up in quick successions. Vinayaka laughed at this and the discus fell from His mouth. The custom of pinching the ear-lobes and kneeling before Vinayaka takes its origin from this. This practice is called *Toppikkaranam*.

There is another version of *Toppikkaranam* and the practice of cuffing the head. When the Demon Gajamukhasura held sway over the universe, including the celestial Devas, he made it incumbent on the Devas to daily kneel before him in the 'Toppikkaranam' posture and cuff their heads. Ganapati's greatest exploit is His vanquishing this demon. It was a strange fight, with both the divinity and the demon having elephant face. After a grim, tough fight Vinayaka broke His tusk off and shot it against Gajamukha. The tusk cleft the demon's heart; but he did not die. He assumed the form of a mouse. The Lord who fought with him fiercely as long as the foe was a big demon, became all compassionate immediately on seeing him humbled to take the form of a tiny little mouse. And the embodiment of Grace He was, Ganapati made the mouse his *vahana* (mount). So a mouse carried the Elephand-God! Yet another incongruity!

The Devas rejoiced over the fall of Gajamukha, and in deep devotion rendered the exercise of *Toppikkaranam* and cuffing

before Ganapati. The practice continued to stay.

The Lord of joy and fun, Ganapati has been responsible for reconciling the usual tiffs between His father Siva and mother Parvati. Poets have portrayed intensely human incidents in the home of Siva.

During one of those little quarrels between Siva and Parvati, the child Vinayaka demanded of them a kiss on each one of his cheeks at the same time. They could not refuse this. And thus as they came close to kiss Him on either side, He withdrew, with the result that the Divine Mother and Father exchanged caresses between themselves. Once the feigned quarrel (प्रणयकलह) between Siva and Parvati intensified and the latter took a very inflexible attitude. Siva could not bear this. He fell at Her feet. Even then She was not moved and remained stony. As Siva was prostrating before Her, Ganapati saw the crescent on Siva's matted locks. Mistaking it for the stem of the lotus, the Elephant-son pulled the moon from Siva's locks and lo, the stony Parvati was provoked to burst into peels of laughter, laughter that carried Her anger away.

Such is the large-heartedness of Ganapati that though a *Brahmacharin* He helped promote the conjugal felicity of the married.

It was this Brahmacharin who in the form of a wild elephant frightened Valli and made her embrace His brother, Kumara or Muruga.

There have been innocent pranks touching Vinayaka and his brother, Kumara together. Sivaprakasa Svamigal graphically details out one such incident:

Vinayaka complained to Siva. "Papa, Muruga pinched my ears".

Siva called for an explanation from Muruga.

Muruga retaliated: "Yes, I was touched to the quick because Ganesh counted my eyes one by one in all my six faces."

Siva turned to Ganesh and asked: "Boy, is that proper?"

It was Ganesh's turn to retaliate: "But is it proper for this tiny tot to measure my trunk?"

Muruga did not reply, but mischievously smiled.

"See your children"—Siva said with pride to Parvati.

One of Ganapati's names is Kumara Guru —the Preceptor of Muruga. There could be nothing greater to signify Ganapati's great wisdom than this status of Kumara Guru—for Kumara was Guru of Siva himself in an *avasara* and got the title Svami-Natha (the Lord of the Supreme Lord). Even He got initiation from Ganesa.

Though there are no puranic accounts about this, we have a sloka in Vidyakara's *Subhahita—Ratna-Kosha* in which Muruga is imparted the greatest knowledge by Ganapati.

Ardha-narisvara is one of the forms of Siva in which the right half is that of Siva, and the left of his spouse Sakti.

Kumara asks Ganapati: "What becomes of the other halves of papa and mama when they unite together as Ardhanarisvara?"

To which Ganapati gives the pregnant reply: 'The other half of papa becomes all that is male in the universe; the other half of Mama becomes all that is female in the universe".

It is this wisdom that entitles him to the title 'Kumara Guru'.

Kumara proves his initiation into this vision of the entire cosmos as forms of Siva and Sakti as a fact of realization in the famous Palani-andi story.

Narada made an offering of the pomegranate fruit of Knowledge to Siva. Both Vinayaka and Kumara liked to taste of it. As wisdom is impartite, Siva could not halve the fruit and satisfy both. He also knew that Knowledge is already theirs. He wanted to reveal this to the whole world. So he said: "He who comes round the universe first will have this fruit".

Kumara, light of build, and having the swift-moving peacock for conveyance was elated at this. He at once started on a trip around the universe.

Heavily-built Ganesh with the mouse for *vahana* was least bothered about this. In His own majestic, slow gait, He circumambulated the Divine Pair, Siva and Parvati, and said:

"To anyone his parents are equal to all the creation put together. In my case, this is factually true. By coming round you both, I have circled round the universe".

The Divine Pair was overjoyed at this. Siva gave the pomegranate to Ganapati.

But he would not eat it. (See his images: He still holds it in his hand.) He wanted to give it to Kumara. The anxiety He showed to taste it in the beginning was only *Lila* (sport).

Kumara returned some time later after his circumambulation of the universe.

He returned with the Knowledge of seeing Siva and Sakti in every speck of the universe.

He also wanted to have some *Lila*. So He feigned as though He was angered at the fruit being given to Ganesh. He became a monk there and then and repaired to a hill in Tamilnad.

Siva pacified Him saying that He is himself the Fruit (Phala) and so need not feel angry at not getting the fruit. So the hill to which Kumara repaired got the name 'Palani'.

Ganapati, who was thus responsible for the monkhood of Kumara, later helped Him to become a Grhasta (house-holder) by forcing Valli to attach herself to Kumara by frightening her as an elephant in rut.

Let us now see Ganapati's relationship with the other Divinities of the Shanmatas.

We have already seen how there is a very close affinity, nay identity, between Ganapati and Siva.

We again see Ganapati as almost identified with Parasakti in the advent and exploits of His manifestation as Vakratunda. The Devas, harassed by the demon Durachara, performed tapas in Kedara to propitiate the Divine Mother as Uma. When she was pleased with the penance of the Devas, the form of Vinayaka emanated from her face—quite naturally as U-M-A, is an obvious re-arrangement of A-U-M, the Primordial Sound. Exactly like Parasakti, this manifestation of Vinayaka, known as Vakratunda—had the lion for His mount. He made short work of Durachara.

More soothing to the heart of those after religious unity is a similar identification of Ganapati with Vishnu, as stated in Bhargava Purana.

Once when Sakti was celebrating the birthday of Ganapati, a great devotee of Vishnu by name Vishva Deva happened to come to Kailas. But he would not comply with the Divine Mother's wish that he should partake of the feast in connection with Ganapati's jayanti. " I won't take food without having darshan of Vishnu ", he said . That very moment Ganesh Himself appeared before him as Vishnu.

Ganapati is also related to Vishnu through matrimony. For His consort Siddhi (Attainment) and Buddhi (Intellect) are the daughters of Brahma and so, grand-daughters of Vishnu. The allegory of the God of Wisdom marrying Attainment and Intellect is completed when the story goes on to say that Ganesh got a son Kshema (Prosperity) from Siddhi, and another son, Labha (Gain) from Buddhi.

Parasakti and Paramesvara, though parents of Ganesh, have jointly and separately offered worship to Ganesh at times of difficulty.

Isvara set out on His great march against Tripurasura without first propitiating Ganesh. As a result, the axis of His chariot broke at the nick of Time. Then Siva prayed to Ganesh and the difficulty was easily tided over. This account is given in *Skandam*.

Similarly we have it from the *Brahmanda Purana* that when the Divine Mother Shri Lalita marched against Bhandasura, the demons installed *Vighna yantras* to stop the Divine Mother's army. At that time, She looked at Isvara and as the looks and smiles of them united Ganapati issued forth ; and He shattered the *Vighna yantras* to pieces.

We have, therefore, seen how intimately connected Ganapati is with Siva, Sakti, Kumara and Vishnu. He is also mentioned in close association with the other remaining Presiding Deity of the Shan-mata, *viz*., Surya (Sun-God). Let us recount just one instance :

When Ganapati was on His way to Kasi, where His great devotee Kasiraja lived. He was confronted by the ogre Dhumaksha in a forest. The ogre was so named because of his eyes puffing out smoke, issuing out of his intense *tapas* on the Sun-God. His *tapas* became very fierce and the Sun-God was moved to send a divine spear to him. Even as the spear was on its way to the ogre from the solar orb, Ganesh drew it to Himself, and killed the ogre with it—it was a case of literally hoisting one with his own petard.

Ganapati's association with the Sun-god is emphasized in his aspect as Nava-sakti Vinayaka, where He is spoken of as containing in Himself the powers of all the nine-planets (ग्रहपति-*ashtottaram*) among whom the Sun-god stands foremost. Anyhow Ganapati is particularly considered to be the Presiding Deity of the malevolent planet Ketu, and worship is offered to Ganesh on Sukla Chaturthi to ward off the evil effects of the wrong position of Ketu.

It is Ganapati's pranks that have installed in Mahabaleswar and Srirangam the Linga of Ravana, and the Ranganatha of Vibhishana respectively. The details of the stories are alike. These images were given to them by Isvara and Sri Rama with the stipulation that they would get implanted wherever they were placed on earth.

Ganapati took the form of a guile-less Brahmin boy and offered His services to Ravana and Vibhishana. He wished that these images should not leave Bharat, to adorn the ogre's land of Lanka. So, getting these images from them at the time of their ablution, He placed them on the earth, and they were implanted firmly in those places.

Thus, we have Srirangam, which is known among Vaishnavas as the Temple of temples (கோயில்) and the great Siva-kshetra, Mahabalesvar.

It is the Kshetras and Tirthas that make for Bharat's unique greatness. Ganapati not only gave Bharat two great Kshetras, but also gave the holy Tirtha, Kaveri.

Saint Agastya, who got in his Kamandalu the holy river Kaveri from Siva, became so much attached to the divine waters that he would not let them flow on earth.

Tamilnad was badly in need of river, and Indra, who was rearing a garden in Sirkali for getting flowers for Siva puja resorted to Ganapati.

Ganapati went to Sahyadri, the abode of Agastya, took the form of a crow, and sat heavily on the Kamandalu. The Kamandalu was tilted. The sacred Kaveri flowed out.

The child of parched Tamilnad was infused with new life with the milk of mother Kaveri drenching its arid tracts.

Vinayaka is particularly pleased by breaking coconut to pieces before Him, and the pieces being taken by the poor and the young ones.

Ganapati proceeded to Kasiraja's place. An ogre entered into the door-step to topple Ganapati as He trod on it. Omniscient Ganapati scented the mischief. So He commanded that all the coconuts brought as *purna kumbha* to Him should be broken on that particular step. His order was carried out. The ogre gave up his ghost as coconut after coconut was broken on him.

Breaking the coconut signifies the breaking up of mere intellect. The thick skull of intellect has to be broken to pieces, if one should enjoy the pulp of feeling and the sweet tender-water of realization.

Something should be said about the worship of Ganapati in Tamilnad. It is usually thought that it was Siruthondar (formerly, Paranjoti, Chief Minister of Narasimha Pallava-7th century) who introduced Ganapati worship in Tamilnadu after his conquest of Badami (Vatapi), wherefrom he is said to have brought an image of Ganapati to be installed in his own village of Tiruchengattankudi. But Mahavidvan Shri S. Dandapani Desikar has proved beyond doubt the untenability of this belief.* There is no inscriptional evidence to show that Siruthondar introduced Ganapati worship in Tamilnad as for example, the inscription which tells that Vijayarajendra brought the Dvarapalaka from Kalyani, after conquering that Kingdom. Sekkilar in his great hagiography 'Periya Puranam' enumerates the things brought by Siruthondar from Vatapi, such as various gems and heaps of money.

If Siruthondar had brought Vinayaka image, unknown in Tamilnad before, the great devotee Sekkilar, who did not miss even minor details, would not have left that out.

The temple at Siruthondar's Tiruchengattankudi is known as Ganapaticcharam. But from the psalms of Gnanasambandar who lived during the times of Siruthondar and has sung in praise of the Siva at Ganapaticcharam, it appears this name was quite an old one and very familiar in his times.

We also learn that Gnanasambandar sang the psalm beginning பந்தத்தால் at Kazhumalam (Sirkali) *before* he visited Ganapaticcharam.

In the 6th stanza of of this hymn Sambandhar refers to Vinayaka. So Ganapati worship had been in vogue in places other

* His book in Tamil on Ganapati (published by the Tiruvavaduturai Adheenam) and *Ganesh Kosh* (Published by Shri Ganesh Kosh Mandal, Poona) are two encyclopaedic works on Shri Ganapati.

than Ganapaticcharam even at that time itself.

The reference to Kaveri flowing out of the pitcher in 'Manimekalai', a very old Tamil classic, also points to Ganapati worship having been popular in times of yore—because we have it from *Skandam* that Vinayaka took the form of a crow and toppled the pitcher of Agastya containing Kaveri.

Whatever the historicity of Vinayaka worship in Tamilnad, it has become very popular here for centuries now. Except Maharashtra, nowhere else in Bharat is Vinayaka worship so popular.* It is the Tamil letter for Omkara that is a very close likeness of the form of Vinayaka's head. *Modaka*, the favourite *naivedya* of Ganapati is an especial delicacy of Tamilnad alone, and even in very old Tamil classics we have reference to it under the name 'kavavu'.

It was He who wrote out beside the *Mahabharata*—the early Tamil Grammar on the peaks of Meru, as testified by Arunagiri.

முத்தமிழ் அடைவினை முற்படுகிரிதனில்
முற்பட எழுதிய முதல்வோனே.

Again when the palm leaves containing the great *tevara* hymns were being consumed by white ants in a cell in the temple at Chidambaram, it was Ganapati who inspired Tirunaraiyur Nambiandar Nambi to discover them and make them the richest possession of the Tamils.

Avvaiyar, the greatest saint-poetess of Tamilnad was a great devotee of Ganapati and she has given us a wonderful *agaval* on Him. Kapila Deva's "Mootha Pillaiyar Tiruvirattai Manimalai" is a soul-moving psalm of immense devotion and intense poesy.

It is in Tamilnad that one commences writing with the circle signifying Vinayaka.

The *Puranas* give an exhaustive list of great Ganapati Bhaktas.

Besides the Trinity and Devi, the great Rshis, Ganaka, Mudgala, Bhargava, Matanga are ardent devotees of Ganapati and there are numerous Ganapati mantras having them as originators.

The great Veda Vyasa too was a devotee of Ganapati as is evident from the fact that it was Ganapati Himself who was the amanuensis to write the *Mahabharata*. The Poet of poets He was, in utter humility. He consented to be the scribe to write out the great epic. Not only that; His love of literature and Dharma was such that without waiting for a quill, Ganapati broke one of His beautiful tusks (one of His name is 'Subhradanta') and used it as the pen.

Bhru-Sundi takes an honoured place among devotees of Ganapati. At the very height of devotion, the devotee actually acquires the form of the divinity (Sarupya). Among Ganapati upasakas it was Bhru-Sundi alone who attained this state when a proboscis began to grow from betwixt his eyebrows.

Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada who was immersed in the realization of Oneness with the Supreme, was a great devotee of all the various manifestations of God-head. We see him as the great Ganesh-Bhakta in his *Pancha-ratna* and *Bhujanga* on Vinayaka. In them, he refers to the especial traits of Vinayaka—*e.g.* as the Deity Who confers the power of finding hidden treasures, called Anjana siddhi: *Nidhisvaram*; Chief of hosts, *Ganesvaram*; as the one who confers the talent of poesy ((*Susahiti* in Phala sruti of the pentad); to His deep ruddy colour resembling japa flower, ruby, coral and rising sun—*japa rakta prasuna pravala prabha taruna jyothi*; the One extolled by Yogis as the centre of the origin of time and form (*kala-bindugam geeyate yogivaryaih*). With all the intense fervour of a Ganapata, Sankara identifies Ganesh with the attributeless Brahman itself in the last two stanzas of the Bhujangam, one of which is :

यमेकाक्षरं निर्मलं निर्विकल्पं
गुणातीतमानन्दमाकारशून्यम् ।
परं पारमोङ्कारमाम्नायगर्भं
वदन्ति प्रगल्भं पुराणं तमीडे ॥

To Him Whom the great ones proclaim as the single syllabled Supreme Sound, Stainless, Unconditioned, Transcending qualities, Bliss, Formless, the Beyond, the Furtherest Limit, the Indwelling Spirit in the womb of *Amnayas* (scriptures)—to that Primeval One I offer praise.

Amnaya garbha has particular relevance to Sankara, if we take *Amnaya* here to mean not only the Vedas, but the Sacred Traditions set up in his own monasteries (Mathamnaya). In the Sahasranama of Ucchishta Ganapati (also referred to as Guhyanama

* It is of significance, that Lokamanya Tilak inspired the nation to a spirit of freedom only through the mammoth Ganesh festivals of Maharastha, when political gatherings were prohibited by the British Rulers.

Sahasraka or the thousand esoteric names) we see Ganapati referred to as the custodian of all the six *amnayas* of the six *maths* of Sankara, five of them established in the terrestrial plane, while the sixth belongs to the domain of pure spirit.

The five maths and amnayas are referred to in the following *namas* (328-337):

कामकोटीपीठवासः, शङ्करार्चितपादुकः, ऋश्य-शृङ्गपुरस्थः, सुरेशार्चितवैभवः, द्वारकापीठसंवासः, पद्मपादार्चितांघ्रिकः, जगन्नाथपुरस्थः, तोटकाचार्य-सेवितः, ज्योतिर्मठालयस्थः, हस्तामलकपूजितः ।

and again *namas* (776-780):

तोटकाचार्यसन्दिष्टपूर्वाम्नायकमन्त्रकः ।
सुरेशसमुपादिष्टदक्षिणाम्नायमन्त्रकः ।
पद्मपादसमादिष्टपश्चिमाम्नायमन्त्रकः ।
हस्तामलकसन्दिष्टोत्तराम्नायकमन्त्रकः ।
शङ्कराचार्यसन्दिष्टोर्ध्वाम्नायाखिलमन्त्रकः ।

—Names which very clearly record that Sri Bhagavatpada established Maths at Kanchi, Sringagiri, Dvaraka, Jagannathapuri and Badari, putting them respectively in charge of himself and his disciples, Suresvara, Padmapada, Totaka and Hastamalaka. It is also of significance that Ganapati is said to be extolled by all the mantras (*Akhila-mantrakah*) in the Kamakoti Peetham. While each of the other Mathas has one of the four Mahavakyas, Kamakoti has all the four of them. Later in this Sahasranama, the five *pithas* are said to signify the five acts of the Lord and Kamakoti in this scheme is the special seat conferring the grace of Liberation (*Urdhvamnaya mantroghair anugraha prakasakah*).

Guhyanama Sahasraka also speaks of the five Lingas that Sankara got from Siva

विद्याभोगयशोमोक्षयोगलिङ्गप्रतिष्ठितः ।

The names of the five Lingas are given as Vidya, Bhoga, Yaso, Moksha and Yoga Lingas.

In the traditional biographies of Sankaracharya, we have the names *Mukti Linga* and *Varalinga* in place of *Vidya linga* and *Yasolinga*. Mukti being none other than Moksha the nomenclature of *Guhyanama Sahasraka* seems more acceptable.

This Sahasranama, occurring in the *Uddamarmesa Tantra*, one of the 64 tantras, is imparted only to those who have touched the very end of *Tantra Upasana*. What appears gross and obscene in it, is in reality a symbol of Supreme Enjoyment of Bliss. That is why the layman is not initiated into it. At a very modest estimate, this Sahasranama should have attained its high status at least some four centuries back, since we come to know that the great Sakta of revered memory, Sri Chidanandanatha, is the eighth in the succession of disciples of one of the schools of Ucchishta Ganapati Upasana.

It is of particular interest to know that Shri Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Nrsimha Bharati Sankaracharya Svamiji of Shri Sringeri Peetha was deeply drawn to this *Sahasranama.*

Sankara's devotion to Ganapati was very great. When he found the Goddess Akhilandesvari of Tiruvanaikka radiating a fierce aspect that common people could not stand, he not only drew that fierce aspect in the Sri Chakras to be placed in Her ears, but also installed an image of Ganapati in front of Her ; because he knew the immense love that Ganapati's presence would evoke in the Divine Mother.

Fittingly, the Kamakshi temple, which is intricately interwoven with the Kamakoti Peetha, contains a number of images of Ganapati, each with a different name. In his Pentad on Devi, Sankara prays to Kamakshi in each stanza : " Let the Goddess residing in this Ambapura, mother of Ganapati, protect me" (Mam Ambapuravasini Bhagavati Heramba Mata avatu). It implies that he is entitled to the Divine Mother's love in an equal measure with Ganapati, beloved of her.

Tyagaraja expresses this explicitly in his song on Kamakshi:

" Vinayakuni Valanu brovave " (Protect me as Thou doest Vinayaka).

" Anandagiriya Sankara Vijayam " unmistakably dwells on the fact that Sankara re-established Ganapatya as one of the Shan-matas.

In the 71st prakarana, it is stated that when Sankara once for all took his abode in Kanchi, he sent out Girijakumara to spread Ganapatyam throughout the land ; and that Girijakumara did accordingly and reported to Sankara the success of his mission.

Ganapati again, is one of the five deities worshipped in the Panchayatana Puja prescribed by Sankara. The great Ganapati Pitha of Morgaon—Shri Yogindra

math—considers Shri Sankara Bhagavadpada as one of the Yugacharyas of Ganapatyam along with Ganaka (Krta Yuga), Mudgala (Treta Yuga), Bhrgu and Veda Vyasa (Dvapara Yuga). Sri Sankaia Bhagavadpada is referred to as Ganesa Acharya of Kali Yuga.

How easy of access Ganapati is, is proved by the fact that He is fond of the commonest things on earth, which are never priced, the white *arka* flowers, the *durva* grass, the *sami* leaf, etc. The puranas speak volumes about the greatness of these. By offering Him in *archana* the 21 kinds of leaves specified in the *Agama*, one gets the 21 bounties of *dharma*, wealth, happiness, auspiciousness, learning, eminence, secular-cum-spiritual fruits, beauty, valour, victory, power of attraction, annulment of miscarriage in family, good progeny, versatility, fame, equanimity, destruction of inauspiciousness, debating power, power of pacifying the irate, annulment of evil incantation and the destruction of all miseries. Let us worship Him, who along with His Mother is the sole succour in this Kali Yuga.

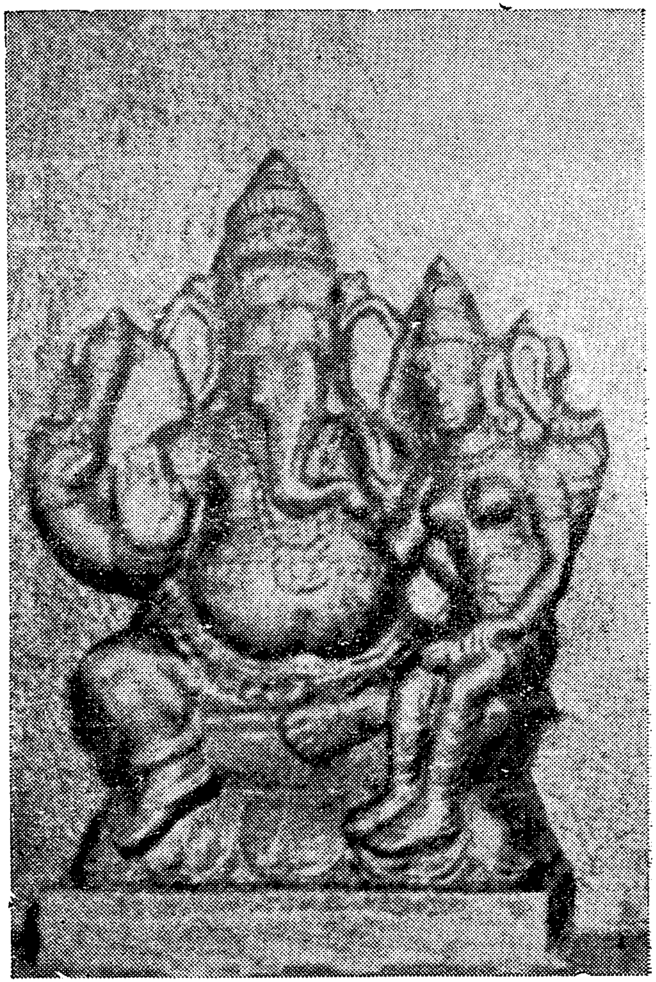
कलौ चण्डीविनायकौ ।

Bala Ganapati.

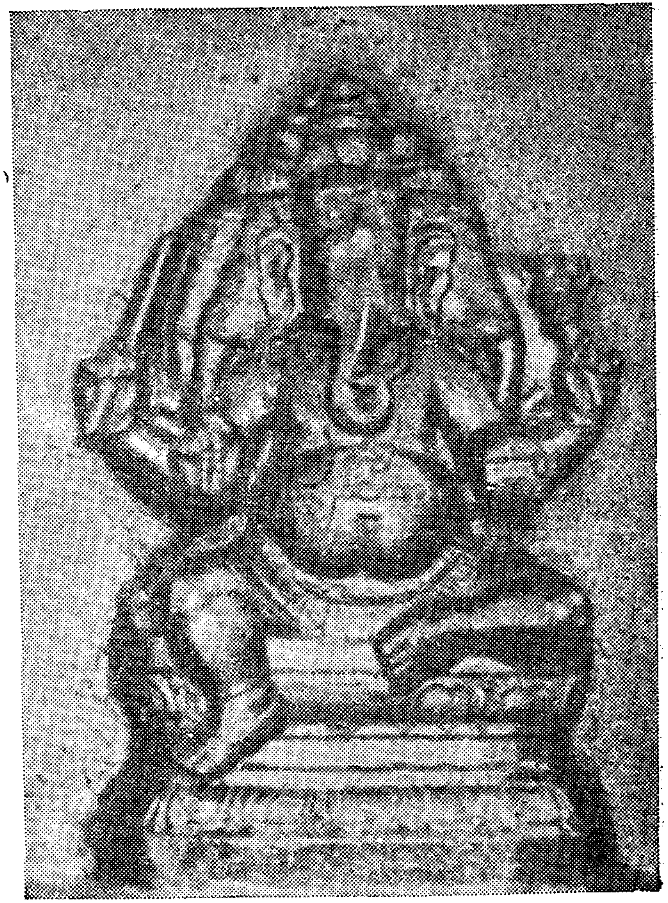
Taruna Ganapati

Bhakti Ganapati

Vira Ganapati



Sakti Ganapati



Dhvaja Ganapati

Siddhi Ganapati

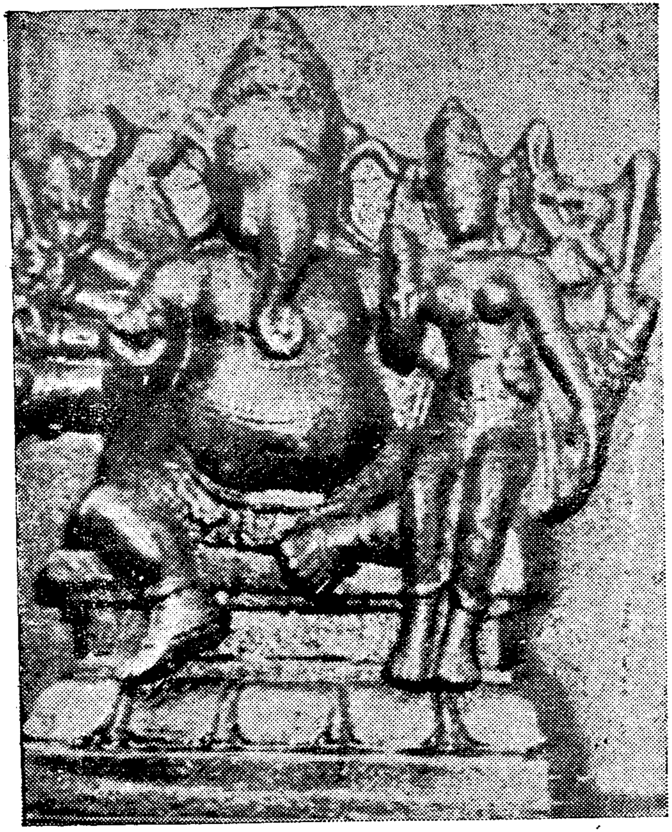
Ucchishta Ganapati

Vighnaraja Ganapati

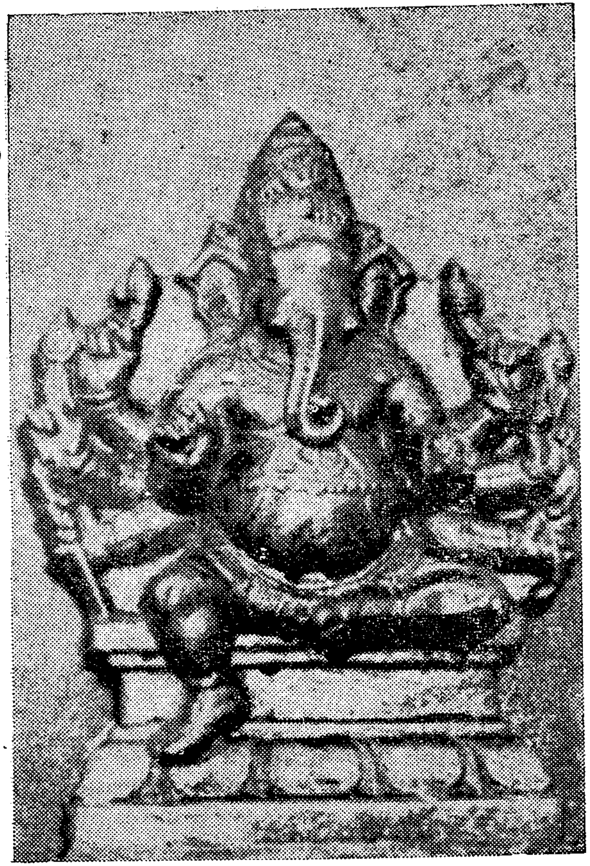
Kshipra Ganapati

Heramba Ganapati

Lakshmi Ganapati

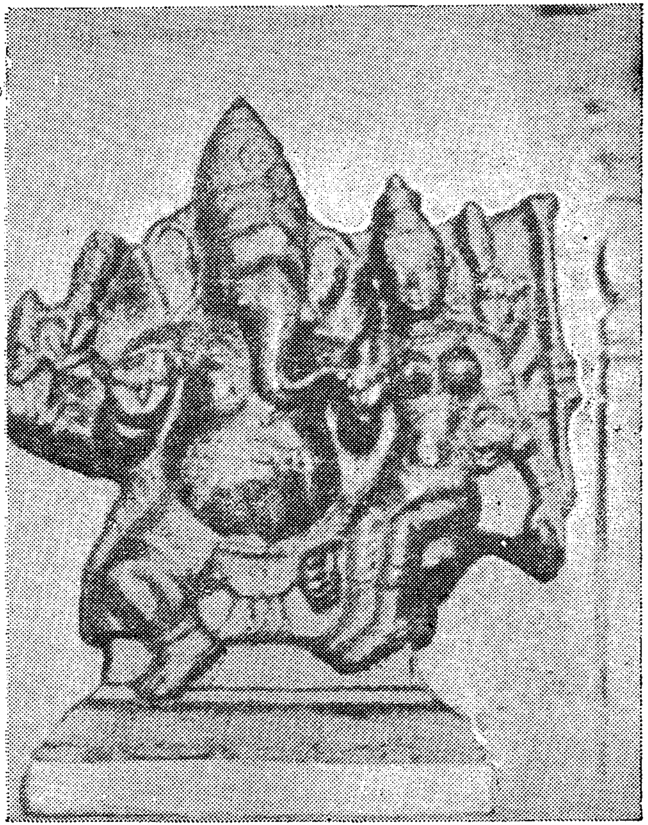


Maha Ganapati



Bhuvanesa Ganapati

Nrtta Ganapati



Urdhva Ganapati

VINAYAKA ABROAD AND HIS RARE FORMS

By

S. NATARAJAN

The fact that Vinayaka images and icons are found outside India is an ample proof to establish that Indian Culture has spread far and wide. Vinayaka is a very popular figure throughout Nepal, Chinese Turkistan, Tibet, Burma, Siam, Indo-China, Java, Bali, Borneo, China and Japan—practically in the whole of East Asia.

Buddhists and Jains also claim Vinayaka as their God. In Buddhist art in India, Nepal and Tibet He appears as not only a Buddhist God but as a demon also. He was known to the Chinese as well as to the Japanese under two forms—one similar to that obtaining in India and the other (double form) two elephant faced deities (male part and female counterpart) standing *vis-a-vis* interfaced which form is practically unknown outside China and Japan. Japanese associate them with romance besides good luck. They call him Kon-Kiten. In China He is seen in a rockcut temple of King-hsein (531 A.D.)

In Nepal Vinayaka is seen with five faces, all that of elephants. Two fine images of Vighneswara were discovered which suggests that Afghanistan in the past ages might have been a part and parcel of the land of the Hindus.

Central Java was once the stronghold of Saivism, Vaishnavism and Buddhism but after the 13th century the people of Central Java gave up Hinduism for Islam. Yet Ganesa still rules the imagination of Javanese. The Javanese conception of Ganesa in his sitting position is : He is calm. His calmness represents a man in 'Samadhi'.

Some of the Javanese who have been brought up in their traditional culture, though they are reckoned as Muslims still have great faith in the Bhakti cult.

They have absolute faith in meditation and the image of Ganesa serves as a model for them. In the images of Ganesa one cannot see the 'pot belly, which is usually associated with Ganesa of India.

Rare Forms of Ganapati.

One can see scores of Ganapati idols in this Punyabhumi India. The sculptors have, enjoyed themselves while carving them out; as a result there are a few images—very rare and unique forms—of Him.

In Suchindram temple in the pillar just opposite to Amman Sannadhi one can easily fix Ganesani—Vinayaka in the female form ! She can be seen seated in Sukhasana pose (that is, one leg folded and the other touching the ground). In two hands she is having the 'Pasa' (noose) and 'Ankusa' (goad) and the other two hands show Abhaya (fearlessness) and Varada (boon) mudras.

In Bhere Ghat (near Jabalpore) there is another Ganesani.

Vyagrapada (Tiger-footed) Ganesani is another unique form of Ganapati, which can be seen only in Madurai Temple. Very near the Dwarapalaka guarding the main entrance to Sundareswarar Temple, at the Kampattadi Mandapa there is this form

only with two hands—having a lotus in one hand and keeping the other hand free just like Meenakshi.

If you want to see Ganapati as a child just like Navaneeta Krishna, you will have to go to Jalagandeswarar Temple in Vellore fort. In the pillars of the Kalyana Mandapa which is very richly carved, the sculptor has produced Ganapati as a child creeping on all fours.

Ganapati is also depicted with five heads and mounted on a lion. In this also there are two varieties. In one, all the five heads are seen in a row, and in the other, four heads see the four directions and the fifth head can be seen on the top. The former icon can be seen in Tiruvottiyur Temple near Madras and the latter in Nagapattinam Temple in Tanjore District.

Ganapati in a very big size—Mukkuruni Vinayaka—can be seen in Madurai Meenakshi Temple, Tiruchendur Murugan Temple, Chidambaram Nataraja Temple and Tiruvanikka Temple. Mukkuruni is a large measure of rice, out of which a single Modaka is prepared for *naivedya* (offering). Hence the name 'Mukkurini Vinayakar.'

A Shaligrama is being worshipped as Ganapati in Tirunallar in Tanjore District.

Ganapati in a beautiful dancing form can be seen in Hoysaleswara temple, Halebid (Mysore State).

A very small figure of Ganapati in marble with the tusk turned in the opposite direction can be seen in Tiruvalanchuzi Temple near Swamimalai.

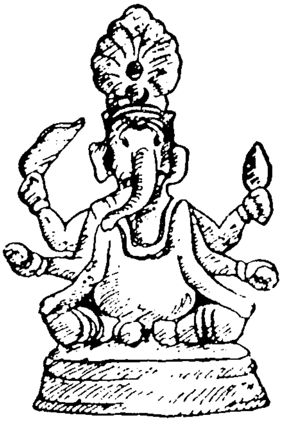
Sakti-Ganapati, also known as Uchchishta Ganapati, is in the Nanjangud Temple in Mysore State. The image is sculptured as laid down in the *Mantra Maharnava.*

Generally Ganapati is enshrined in small temples and is given a prominent seat at the entrance of temples. But there is a very big temple mainly dedicated to him. It is in Pillaiarpatti near Karaikudi in Ramanathapuram District. He is seen with only two hands.

If you go to Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh, you can see Vinayaka playing a flute just like Krishna !

Courtesy: *Bhavan's Journal*

GANAPATI IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES



Nepal

Java

China

Japan

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF GANAPATYAM

By

V. RAMASUBRAMANIAM

'Shanmata—Sthapanacharya', as applied to Adi Sankara, conveys the literal meaning of 'The establisher of six religious sects.' Here the term 'establisher' does not mean 'founder' but connotes only "the authoritative incorporator", as all the six religious sects authoritatively recognized by Sankara did exist in one form or other before him and he only regulated their rites, practices and dogmas to fit in with his basic theory of Ecclectic Gnosticism so that India could have an integrated composite religion of Theism, quite distinct from the agnosticism of Buddhism and Jainism. The present paper confines itself to the origin, evolution and the final merger of one of these six sects, *viz.*, "Ganapatyam" in modern Hinduism.

There are two canonical works, which are exclusively devoted to Ganapati worship *viz.*, *Ganesa Purana* and *Mudgala Purana* ; but as these happen to be very late compilations, compiled centuries after the period of Sankara their contents show much prejudice and more speculation and cannot be relied upon for impartial research.

But references to Ganapati worship, Vinayaka-worship, Vighneswara worship and other allied themes occur in many Vedic and post vedic literature, the smritis and the great epics, besides other earlier Puranas, compiled before Sankara's period, which are the sources of the present article on the probable origin and evolution of the cult of "Ganapatya."

Ganapati : The opening verse of Rig veda III 23, dedicated to the god Brahmanspati or Brihaspati, runs thus: "Gananam tva ganapatim, havamahe Kavim Kavinam Upamasravastamam Jyeshta rajam Brahmanam Brahmanaspathe Anahsrunvan Utubhissida sadanam."

In this rik the words, 'Gana', 'Ganapati,' 'Kavi' and 'Jyeshta' occur and they happen to have something to do with the later cult of "Gaanapatya". But all the Anukramanikas, Brihad-devatas, and Vedic commentaries declare that this verse is dedicated to the god "Brihaspati", otherwise known as "Brahmanaspati", the later preceptor of the Gods, who is also a 'Lord of Hosts' (Ganapati). The eloquent omission of the elephant head (Gajanana) and tusk, (Ekadanta), of the pot-belly (Mahodara) and the rat-vehicle (Mushikavahana) and of his being the creator and remover of obstacles (Vighnaraja) may at once tempt us to dismiss the equation of this "Brihaspati' with the 'Ganapati' of the Ganapatyas. And there were other gods too of the Hindu pantheon (Siva, for instance) who were addressed as 'Ganesa' (Verse 47, Chapter II of *Natya Sastra*) Sayanacharya equates the word 'Gananam', with 'Devadi-gananam', and takes the term 'Gana' to mean the band of Angirasas. At another place (Rig Veda X-112-9) he explains 'Ganesa' as Stotru-ganesa,(Lord of the band of singers) and equates Ganesa with Indra.

The most conspicuous of Ganapati's later characteristics is that he should take prece-

dence over all the gods and that all auspicious works (Karmas) must be preceded by his worship. If this claim of the god is to be accepted as pre-Vedic, or even co-eval with the Vedas, we must have concrete examples of such prayers preceding religious or secular works of that period. But none of the Vedas, Vedangas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, Smritis, epics, Mahapuranas, Arthasastras, Dharmasastras, Kamasastras, Natyasastras, Mahakavyas and works of such famous authors as Valmiki, Vyasa, Bhasa, Kautilya, Vatsyayana, Bharata, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Sri Harsha and Sudraka contain even one benedictory verse dedicated to Ganapati. On the other hand, it is hard to find any literary work later than the 12th or 13th century, which does not begin with a laudation of the elephant—faced deity. The Tamil Sangam works too do not begin with any invocation to this god.

The Natyasastra specifically mentions the necessity of warding off the obstructions caused by "Vighnas" (obstacles) but does not enjoin the propitiation of Vighneswara. The order of worship at the consecration ceremony of a playhouse gives a long list of deities which does not contain Ganapati.

Though Abhinavagupta the great Saiva philosophical commentator of Natyasastra who lived after the 10th century A.D. equates 'Mahagramani' in this list with the Leader of the Ganas (Ganapati), Dr. Man Mohan Ghosh* finds it very difficult to accept this identification because in verse 58 of the same chapter of *Natya sastra*, the term "Mahaganesvaras" occurs in plural indicating the different leaders of Ganas who followed Siva. One of such leaders has been mentioned there as Nandisvaran (Nandin). Besides this the term Ganesa, (the leader of the Ganas) has also been applied to Siva in verse No. 47 of this chapter :

"O God of Gods, the great God, the Lord of Ganas (Ganesvara) and the killer of Tripura, accept this my offering answered by Mantra!"

Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy remarks that the word "Gana" besides meaning the followers of Siva, is also the technical designation of early 'collections of related literature' and Ganapati, the son of Siva was the reputed deity of Vidya (knowledge) for centuries as "Brihaspati", had been a compiler, or redactor, or Editor-in-chief.

Muir has opined that lists of words appropriately submitting to a general principle of classification were drawn up in the early age of philosophy. These lists were 'Ganas' and he who had mastered the 'Ganas' was designated 'Ganapati', and recognized as the personification of wisdom itself. The Pratisakhyas gave ganas. Yaska's treatise, *Nirukta* is a collection of such Ganas.

If, however, Brihaspati be equated with "Vighneswara", he comes only third in rank —after Siva and Brahman in the above list.

From the above discussion, we can safely arrive at a conclusion that certain aspects of the Ganapati-religion *viz.*, the God being the lord of hosts, his seniority and learning were existent even at the period of the Rig Veda III Mandala. (Circa 2000—1500 B.C.) and that it had continued to be current till the period of the compilation of the *Bharatiya Natyasastra* (circa 200 B.C.-A.D. 200).

VINAYAKA :

Dr. R. C. Hazia thinks that the worship of Vinayaka could be traced back to a fairly early period. He finds the earliest mention of 'Vinayaka' in the '*Manava Grihya sutra*' (2-14).

According to this *Sutra* the Vinayakas are malevolent demons, four in number. The *Manava Grihya sutra* gives their names as 'Salakatankata,' 'Kusmandaraja-putra', 'Usmita' and 'Devayajana' and says : "The following are the symptoms of those who are possessed by these (Vinayakas). (Such a person) pounds, clods, tears grass, writes on his limbs and has various inauspicious dreams in which he sees waters, men with shaved heads, men with matted hair, persons wearing red clothes, camels, pigs, asses, chandalas and so on. (He feels that) he is moving through the air and, when walking along the road, (he) thinks that somebody is pursuing him from behind. When possessed by these Vinayakas, princes do not get their kingdoms although they are otherwise qualified, girls cannot secure husbands, although they are eager to do so and possess auspicious signs, women do not get any issue although they are anxious to have offspring and are otherwise qualified, children of virtuous women die, a learned teacher fails to attain the position of an Acharya, students face great interruptions in the course of their study, merchants' trade fails, and agriculture of husbandmen yields poor crops."

* (Dr. M. M. Ghosh, footnote on p. 33-34 of the Natyasastra-R.A.S.B. Edition 1950).

The same *Sutra* next prescribes a rite, which is both expiatory and propitiatory in nature and in which various things, including meat and fish (both raw and cooked) and wine and cakes are to be offered and a strange variety of beings is to be invoked *e.g*, Vimukha, Baka, Kalaha, Vinayaka, Virupaksha, Lohitaksha, Vaisravana, Mahasena, Mahadeva, Maharaja.

The Visnudharmottara (II-105) confirms that the Vinayakas were four in number.

The Yajur veda equates Ganapati with Rudra, and the *Sankhayana Srautasutra* (IV-19) tells us that the Ganas are malevolent spirits attacking men and animals with disease and death and receiving the bloody entails of the victims.

In the *Taittiriya Samhita* (IV-5-4-1) and in the *Vajsaneyi Samhita* (16-25), occur " Namo Ganebhya Ganapatibhyascha vo namah " (Obeisance to the Ganas and to Ganapati).

There is one well known verse, attributed to Manu, which runs as follows :-

Vipranam daivatam Sambah
Ksatriyanam tu Madhavah
Vaisyanam tu bhaved Brahma
Sudranam Gananayakah. "

(Siva is the Lord of Brahmins, Vishnu of Kshatriyas, Brahma of Vishnu and Ganapati of Sudras).

This is referred to by Monier Williams and Hopkins, but it does not occur in the present text of the Manusmriti. It is obvious that this couplet is a later interpolation.

It is generally acknowledged that the above-mentioned Samhitas and Sutras are older than the 4th Century B.C.

The next epoch-making reference occurs in the Yajnavalkya Smriti, which tells us that there is *one single Vinayaka*, known by the four names ' Mita', ' Samita' etc. It further informs us that Rudra and Brahma appointed this Vinayaka to create obstacles in the actions of people, to help them in attaining success, and to act as the leader of the Ganas, that his mother was Ambika and that he is also known as Maha Ganapati (*Yajna* I-271-290-299). Offerings prescribed for the worship of this deity include fish, meat, wine, bulbous roots, cakes and sweetmeats (Modaka). In giving these additional attributes to the vedic and post vedic Ganapatis, this *smriti* which is dated not later than 300 A.D. following first of all its avowed Monism of the Vedanta school of philosophy, absorbs all the four or more Vinayakas into one single 'Mahaganapati', but refrains from giving us any clue to his form or image (the elephant head, single tusk and potbelly) or to his rat-vehicle (*Mushika-vahana*).

In the Anuvaka of *Narayanopanishad*, there is " Ganapati-Gayatri ".

Tatpurushaya vidmahe, vakratundaya dhimahi, Tannodanti prachodayat.

Here Ganapati has been called " Vakratunda" (with a trunk) and Danti (with a tusk) two later attributes. All modern scholars place the date of this Upanishad between A.D. 550 and 900. (*Vide* "Outline of the Religious Literature of India " Farquhar p. 188).

The *Gatha-Saptasati*, (IV-72 and V-3 N.S.P. Edn.), contains references to the image of Ganapati with his 'trunk' which suggests that he had an elephant's head and these references are not considered interpolated passages. This anthology of erotic poems, attributed to the Satavahana King Hala, has also been dated approximately as not later than the 2nd century after Christ. Following him Amarasimha, Varahamisra, Harsha, Dandin and many of the Puranas refer to the elephant-head.

But wherefrom did Hala get his clue to this curious form is a matter of conjecture. We have a doubtful references to such an image in *The Baudhayana Grihya-sesha-sutra* (III-10) and the *Baudhayana Dharma-sastra* (II-5-83-90), in which we have references to the propitiation of Vighna, Vinayaka, Vira, Sthula, Varada, Hastimukha, Vakra-tunda, Ekadanta, Lambodara Ganapati, the Vighna parshadas and the Vighna-parshadis. It is not safe to allocate this *Baudhayana-grihya-sesha-sutra* a date contemporaneous with Baudhayana or even with Hala. It may perhaps even be later than the latter!

The progress report of the Archaeological Survey of India, western circle, for the year ending March, 1907, pp. 34-55, and the Epigraphica Indica, IX, pp. 277 ff., give us the information about the existence of four images of Vinayaka, facing the four quarters, perched on the top of the pillar established at Ohatiyala in Samvat 918 by the Prathihara King Kakkuka. In Nepal and Indo-China, four faced Vinayakas are more common. The later Ganesa Purana (1.46-139) confirms the concept of four heads for Ganapati-Vinayaka. It is significant that the *sutra* works, mentioned above, prescribe that the

offerings to the Vinayakas are to be placed at a 'Chatuspatha" (Cross-way).

It is almost certain that this deity had already acquired the elephant-head before the date of Hala. How and why he got it, have been explained through more than one myth, occuring in the later Puranas.

There are some scholars, who give this elephant-headed god a Dravidian or even Proto-dravidian origin. But the conspicuous absence of any laudatory hymn or verse on him in any of such early Tamil Sangam Literature as *Tolkappiyam*, *Tirukkural*, *Silappadhikaram*, *Manimekhalai* *Purananuru*, *Narrinai*, *Ahananuru*, etc., clinches the issue negatively.

Others there are who consider this deity as a fertility god and speculate on the astronomical and seasonal significance of the festival of "Vinayaka-Chaturthi" basing their arguments, over the ritual of worship of Ganesa with a variety of leaves. They also try to connect the movement of the moon and the sun and their yearly joint transit through the asterism of Hasta. A few scholars have also attempted to equate Ganesa Dvimukha, with the Roman two faced Janus—the God of the 1st month of the year. These later even connect the Indian word "Gana" with the Latin "Janus".

We may as well speculate more fruitfully to discover a relationship between the Ionian dancing God, Dionysos and Ganesa. The former was the leader of a host of animal-headed mischievous satyrs, besides being the son of their supreme god Zeus.

He was decorated with green leaves and propitiated with wine and meat and dancing orgies. He was also the favourite deity of dramatists and actors.

There are scholars who connect the worship of this God with the orgies of ancient Indian Saktism or Vama-marga. And it is also true that some of the rituals have crept into the worship of Ganapati by the Ganapatyaś in some regions of ancient India. But do all these resemblances justify our tracing the origin of the Ganapatya cult to the Greek cult of Dionysos? I think not.

We have thus far confined ourself to the tracing of the evolution of this cult from its vedic or even pre-vedic worship of Ganas or Alphabetical-grouping, to its full bloom into a single Divinity.

Various independent characteristics of Ganapati-Vinayaka occurring in different ages, began to be integrated into one multiple personality. This process of integration had been very slow before the advent of Sankara, but, with the new ideology of Monotheism becoming popular, Ganapatyam became the foremost to reconstruct its old edifice to suit the new spirit. Its intellectual adherents began to compose Upanishads, Puranas, Smritis and Gayatri hymns in praise of this newly integrated deity.

The following are some of the extant works that contain ideas and ideologies conceived during and after the period of Sankara —

1. *Ganesa Purana*, (2) *Mudgala Purana*, (3) *Bhavishya Purana*, (4) *Varahapurana*, (5) *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, (6) *Skanda Purana*, (7) *Brahma Vaivarta Purana*, (8) *Vamana Purana*, (9) *Bhavishyttora Purana*, (10) *Garuda Purana*, (11) *Agni Purana*, (12) *Narayanopanishad*, (13) *Atharvasikhopanishad*, (14) *Baudhayana Grihyasesa sutra*, (15) *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, (16) *Lingapurana* (17) *Atharva sirshopanishad*, (18) *Ganapati Upanishad*, (19) *Ganesa Gita*, etc.

Before concluding this analysis of the history of Ganapatyam, it may not be out of place to give a brief description of the concept of the image of Ganapati with his symbols, vehicle and ayudhas, and also to suggest their probable significances gathered from the above-mentioned texts.

GANAPATI (Lord of hosts)

This epithet has already been explained in the earlier paragraphs of this essay.

GAJANANA (Elephant-headed)

The most remarkable feature about Ganesa is His elephant head fitted on a human body. Such animal-headed deities were extant in ancient Egypt. The hawk-headed Horus was one such. But more common in the middle eastern countries were the human-headed, animal-bodied gods and demons. The Sphinx had a lion-body. The Centaur had a horse-body. But in India itself the lion-headed Narasimha, the boar-headed Varaha, the buffalo-headed Mahishasura, the monkey-headed Hanuman, the horse-headed Hayagriva and others were quite familiar.

A word about the origin of this divinity in Sakti's dirt: "Dirt and sweat" can only be the

physical manifestation of her Illusory Self (Mahamaya) whose body enclosed within it all this universe (*Atharvasirsha*). The elephant represents the directions of the compass (Dik-gajas). Sakti, being the co-existing eternal half of the Paramatman, Siva, Ganesa is taken as the joint " Sow " of Siva and Sakti. This interpretation is plausible since the concept of the elephant-head seems to have come into existence after the assimilation of advaitic Vedantism by the Sakti cult in India.

LAMBODARA (*Pot-bellied*)

When once it is conceded that this God had all the universe within him, His image must be suggestive of a spacious container (Atharvasirsha).

EKADANTA (*Single-tusked*).

The mythology behind this term tells us that being irritated by the derisive laughter of the Moon-god, Ganesa plucked out one of his tusks and threw it against the moon. But the "Atharvasirsha" explains Eka as Maya or Illusion, and Danta as the sustainer of Maya from which everything proceeds ; Ganesa represents the unity and one-ness of these two.

SURPAKARNA (*Winnow-like ears*).

These are taken to be emblematic of the winnowing away of the obstacles of the Bhakta (Brahma-vaivarta-Puranam).

VINAYAKA (*One without a superior*)

The Vamana Purana explains this as " one born without a father " But the " Bhavisya Purana " interprets it as " one who leads the Gods in the path of virtue."

VIGNARAJA OR VIGHNESVARA (*Lord of Obstacles*)

This deity is the destroyer of obstacles, fear of untimely death and grantor of salvation (*Atharvasirsa*). It conveys also the suggestion that He is the creator of obstacles to those who do not propitiate Him.

SIDDHIDATA (*Creator of the alphabets*)

" From ancient times, the Hindu alphabet is called " Siddhai " and learning of the alphabet began with " Siddhi ". We have legends depicting him as a scribe (of " the Mahabaratha ") . In the Tamil land, all written manuscripts begin with a ' Pillayar-chuzhi ' (உ) at the top. But it is more reasonable to take the word " Siddhi " in the usual sense of " accomplishment or "success" and make Ganesa the giver of accomplishment or success."

VAKRATUNDA (*crooked-faced*).

The elephant-head with its proboscis is uniquely crooked. The " Atharvasirsha" explains that since Ganesa destroys with his face (tunda) all allurements of the world emanating from Buddhi and Siddhi, he is called, Vakra-tunda.

' Vakra ' in astronomy means ' moving backwards ' and ' Vakra-tunda ' may mean ' one having a head facing backward ' (like the Roman Janus and our own Makara Sankranti Purusha, Ganesa is also called ' Dvimukha ' (double-faced).

There are a few specimens of four-headed Ganesa in India and Indo-China facing the four directions. At Cahatiyala, is a stone column on the top of which are four images of Ganesa facing the four directions. An inscription, with an opening stotra of Vinayaka, is also carved below it. Father Heras refers in his monograph on Ganesa (in Tamil culture) one which has five heads four of them facing the directions and the fifth jutting out above them. He also refers to another image " coming from Munshiganj District, Dacca, which has five heads in the same tier, as the six heads of Shanmukha". There is also another five faced ten-armed image of Ganesa, now in the British Museum seated under a tree on a high throne in 'Maharaja Lilasana ', posture. A devi, holding a Padma in her left hand is seated on the left leg of the God, staring upward with blank eyes. Below Him is the rat. It is evidently an image of Heramba—(C. B Sitaraman in his monograph on Ganesa images in ' The Bharatiya Vidya'). There is another five-headed Heramba Ganapati, seated on a lion, in the Nilayatikshi temple of Nagapattinam.

R. D. Banerji in his *Haihayas of Tripura* refers to 64 Yoginis, discovered in the circular arcade of a temple near Jubbalpore. Ganesani is one of them. She has a thin waist and full breasts. The knee is supported by the left hand of a kneeling deity with an elephant face. This is the feminine form of Ganesa.

There are many examples of a Ganesa standing at the right of a group of Navagrahas (planets).

In describing the finds of the Ellora caves Burgess refers to a Goddess standing between

flaying fires, doing ascetic penance. She is four-armed and the upper left balances a Ganesa. On the upper right is a linga. On the pedestal is carved a crocodile, the vehicle of the Goddess Ganga. Prof. Sylbian Levi has published a Balinese Vinayaka Stotra in Sanskrit Texts from Bali in which occurs the following line :

Umasutam namayami Gangaputram namonamah !

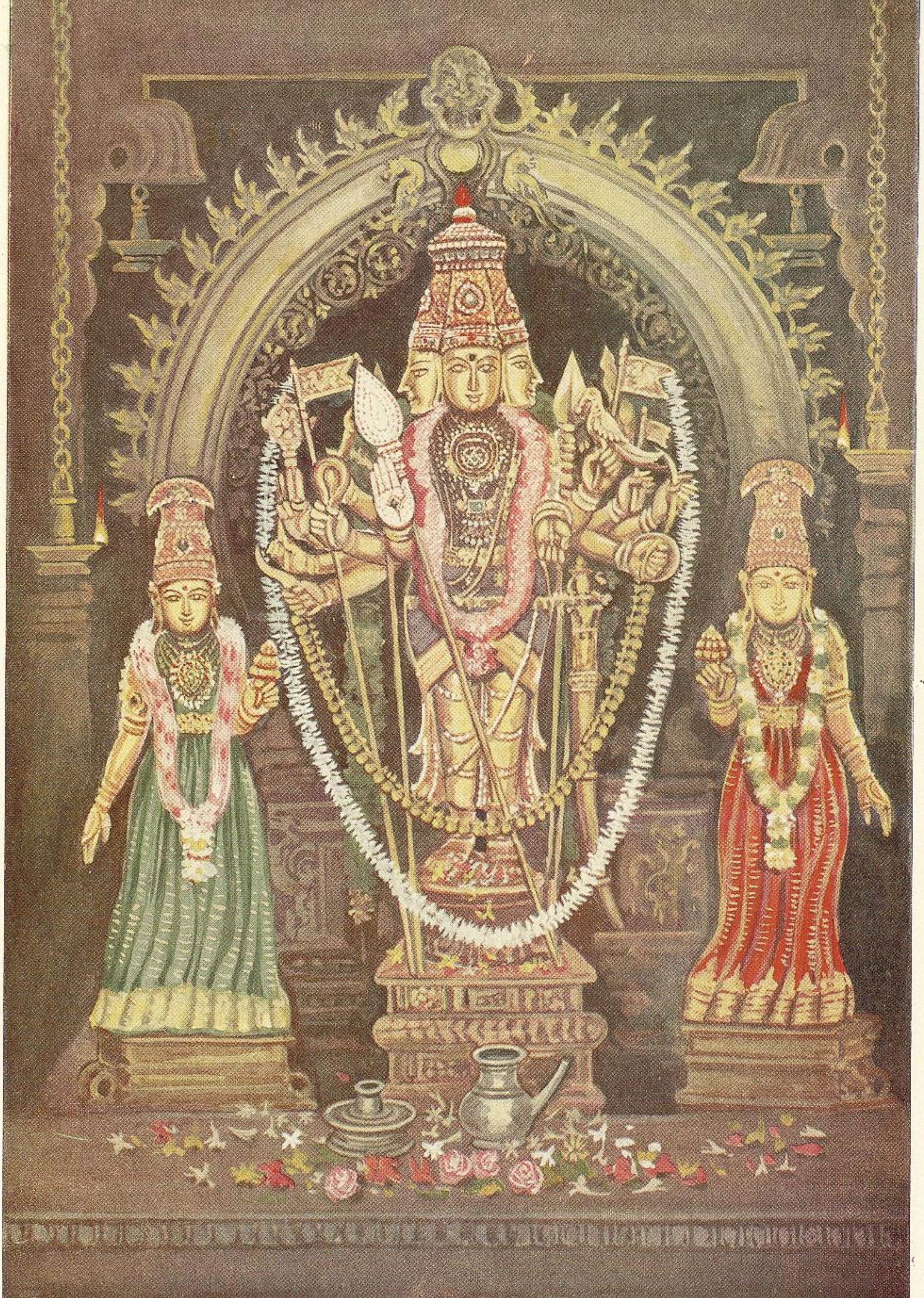
Here Uma is identified with Ganga.

There are a few examples of ' Valampuri-Vinayakas ' where the proboscis of the elephant is turned to the right instead of the usual left side.

The Tamil term ' Pillayar ' which conveys ordinarily the sense of the honoured son, is interpreted some times as ' the honoured Elephant' from the word ' Pillai " meaning the young one of an elephant. The Pali ' Pillaka ' also conveys the same meaning.

Before closing it is essential to say a word about the rat-vehicle of Ganesa. One lexicographer equates ' Mushika ' with a thief. Mr. Gupta states that Ganesa is the Lord of the Harvest, overcoming the pestilence of the field-mouse.... He equates ' Ekadanta ' with a plough. But the ' Ganapati Atharvasiras ' while confirming the above equation, states that the Brahman with Maya puts on many concrete forms and enters into various enjoyments, like a thief.

There are a few scholars who identify the pictorial image of a rat with the Sanskrit letter ' OM '.



कुमारेशसूनो गुहस्कन्दसेनापते शक्तिपाणे मयूराधिरूढ ।
पुलिन्दात्मजाकान्त भक्तार्तिहारिन् प्रभो तारकारे सदा रक्ष मां त्वम् ॥

Kumara! Son of Siva! Dweller in the cave of the heart! Oh, Thou Who was lumped into one by the Divine Mother! Commander-in-Chief of the celestials (devas), and incidentally, Spouse of Devasena, the Princess of the devas! Lord with the Spear of Knowledge in hand, and riding the Peacock which symbolizes the origin of form through its variegated colours! Beloved of Valli, the daughter of the hunter! Protect me for ever, Oh Lord, Who is the dispeller of the devotees' distress!

This is a stanza from Sri Sankara's *Subrahmanya Bhujangam.* Traditional accounts have it that one of Sankara's opponents subjected him to *abhichara* or imprecatory incantations as a result of which Sankara's physical health was severely impaired. As there was much work yet to be done by him for the welfare of the world, the Lord Kumara appeared in his dream and bade him go over to Tiruchendur in the South Coast and offer worship to Him.

Sankara did accordingly and adorned the Lord of Tiruchendur with the garland of his hymn, *Subrahmanya Bhujangam.* One of the *slokas* in it explicitly says that a mere sight of the sacred ashes of the Lord of Tiruchendur given in the *pannir*-leaf will drive away all diseases, including possession by evil spirits.

Kumara or Subrahmanya, Lord of Vedic rites incarnated as Kumarila Bhatta, the great Karma-mimamsaka upholding Vedic rites as the sole means of Liberation, to the exclusion of devotion and enquiry. Such an extreme view too was necessary when Buddhism swung to the other extreme and set at nought Vedic rites thoroughly. At the point when Kumarila had almost stemmed the tide of Buddhism by his emphasis on rituals, Sankara who is the *avatar* of Siva, father of Kumara, commenced his mission of establishing the path of enquiry as the supreme means of Liberation, with rituals and devotion as ancillaries. Sankara vanquished Kumarila when the latter was on the point of leaving his body.

But the Kumara he extols in *Subrahmanya Bhujanga* is not only the Lord of Vedic rites (*Maheedeva Deva*), but also the import of the great proclamations of the Vedas which stress the identity of the Absolute and the individual soul (*Mahavakya goodha*).

(*Picture* : Image of the six-faced Shanmukha in Tiruchendur)

KAUMARAM

(THE FAITH OF KUMARA.)

'Svami' is the most common word for God in India. It is significant 'Svami' is primarily the name of Subrahmanya (or Kumara) alone. Other Divinities have, so to say, borrowed this name from Kumara.

Enumerating the names of Kumara, Amara Kosha *says :*

देवसेनापतिः शूरः स्वामी गजमुखानुजः ।

in which 'Svami' occurs as a name of Kumara.

While He is worshipped as the Brahmachari (celibate) Kartikeya in the North, He is worshipped in Tamil Nadu as Muruga with two consorts. The Tamils speak of Muruga as the foremost deity of both the Tamil language and the Tamil culture. He is the great upholder of the Vedic way, as the word 'brahmanya' denotes in His supreme name 'Subrahmanya'.

*'Muruga' and 'Subrahmanya' are names signifying the love for this God of two streams of Indian culture. Similarly the love of the two streams of Grace—*viz., *Siva and Sakti —unite in Subrahmanya. He is the younger of the two sons of Siva and Sakti.*

Though Siva and Sakti have different parts of body, They are one at heart. If we get to the source of this seat of love, we will be the recipients of Divine Grace in full. Subrahmanya is where the love of Siva and Sakti unite and become one. So, by invoking the grace of Subrahmanya we invoke the Grace of Siva and the Divine Mother also.

As He is the God of Brahmanya, He came to this world whenever Vedic way was in extreme danger and re-established the Veda Dharma. *Saint Jnana Sambandha—the great Devara-hymnist of Tamil Nadu—was one such. Kumarilabhatta of the North was also another incarnation of Subrahmanya.*

As Murugan, the beautiful and Marugan, the beloved nephew and son-in-law of Vishnu —Subrahmanya is extolled throughout Tamil Nadu. As Marugan He is the great integrator among the Divinities, the son of Siva and Sakti becoming the son-in-law of Vishnu.

—H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI

WORSHIP OF MURUGA

By

N. MURUGAVEL.

IN VEDIC LORE

Muruga is Subrahmanya in Vedas. When the Vedas extol Siva, it says " Sadasivom " only once. But it extols Muruga saying " Subrahmanyom ", not once, but thrice. In this word Subrahmanya, *Su* denotes Joy, *Brahma* denotes the Supreme Reality, *Nya* denotes whatever takes its origin in the Supreme Reality. So Subrahmanya means the one who took His origin from the Supreme Reality which is Joy and is inseparable from that Reality.

Subrahmanya's most sacred Mantra refers to Him as Saravana Bhava. Saram is a kind of grass. Vanam is a forest or lake. 'Saravana Bhava' denotes that He took His form out of the lake surrounded by Sara grass. The Puranas tell us that the divine sparks from the eyes of Siva took the form of Muruga after they travelled through the sky, the air, the fire, the water, and then at last settled on the earth in a Gangetic lake full of Sara grass. Saravanabhava also has a philosophical import : Sa - auspiciousness; Ra - light or bounty ; Va - purity ; Na - prowess ; Bhava - He who took His birth out of these.

Skanda is another important name of Muruga and His exploits are called *Skanda Purana.* Skanda means that which is gathered into one. The six divine sparks from the eyes of Siva first took the form of six different babes. The divine Mother hugged them all at once, and behold! the six merged into the one who is appropriately enough called Skanda. Skanda also means the one who scorches the power of enemies. In its Tamil form Kanda, it denotes that Muruga is the firm support of individual souls. Similarly the various other names of Muruga also signify the various great qualities of Him.

ESPECIAL GOD OF TAMILNAD.

The worship of Muruga has been obtaining in Tamilnad since of yore. Research scholars tell that Lemuria (Tamilnad) is the oldest part of the earth and in that too the mountainous terrains (குறிஞ்சித்திணைப் பகுதி) is earliest.

Tholkappiam, which is five thousand years old, speaks of Muruga as the deity of the mountainous regions. Therefore, we can say that Muruga worship has been prevalent in Tamilnad from long past.

The old Tamil people were great nature-lovers. They led a life which was perfectly in harmony with nature. When they saw the Sun rising above the Bay, the red splendour over blue billows brought to their minds the picture of a ruddy child riding a peacock. The hearts of Tamils just melted in love towards this Muruga on the peacock mount.

NAKKEERAR.

Nakkeerar, in the very opening lines of *Tirumurugarruppadai* equates Muruga on the peacock with the Sun rising above the Bay.

''உலகம் உவப்ப வலனேர்பு திரிதரு
பலர்புகழ் ஞாயிறு கடற்கண் டாஅங்கு
ஓஅற இமைக்கும் சேண்விளங்கு
அவிர்ஒளி''

It implies among other things that

1. Just as the world wakes up at dawn, so also the wisdom of sentient beings gets new awakening with the *darshan* of Muruga.

2. The light of the Sun confers benefits on humanity and so does Muruga.

3. The Sun God is common to all religions. Similarly the principle which Muruga embodies is universal.

4. Sun dispels external darkness, Muruga dispels internal darkness.

5. The Sun scorches unhygienic accretions and infuses life into whatever is good in nature. So also Muruga punishes the wicked and protects the good.

6. Without the Sun no life on earth is possible. Without the grace of Muruga there is no spiritual life at all.

7. Breeze from the Bay at the time of Sun-rise contains extra oxygen—ozone, and it cures many diseases. So also Muruga has an added element of grace which He confers on those who meditate upon Him.

Muruga, though He is universal has been worshipped most by the Tamils. We have it from the old classics of Tamil that it was Muruga who taught Tamil to Sage Agastya. He is propitiated even when abused in Tamil.

''முத்தமிழால் வைதாரையும் அங்கு
வாழவைப்பான்''

says Arunagirinathar ; ''சங்கத் தமிழின் தலைமைப் புலவன்'' (The Chief Poet of Tamil Sangam) says Kumara Gurupara.

The very form of Muruga conforms to the scheme of Tamil language and its grammar. Tirupugazh Dandapani Swamigal explains this at length. The 18 consonants of Tamil language are His 18 eyes (like Siva, each of His faces has three eyes.) The hard, soft and medium consonants are six each and so are His faces. The 12 vowels are His 12 arms. The peculiar letter of Tamil ஃ represents the spear (Sakti or Vel) of Muruga.

கண்நிகர் மெய்யும், சென்னிக்
கணம் உறழ் இனத்தின் கூறும்
திண்ணிய புயங்க ளேபோல்
திகழ்தரும் உயிரும்; வேறொன்று
எண்ணிடற் கரிய தாகும்
எஃகமும் இயலிற் காட்டும்
புண்ணிய முருகன் செய்ய
பொற்பதம் போற்றி வாழ்வாம்.

(Pulavar Puranam)

HIS MANIFOLD GRACE.

Muruga is primarily the Preceptor who imparts the highest knowledge. As Palaniyandi He is a Yogin. He is also the great warrior ; He is the Commander-in-Chief of the Gods. All the saints have worshipped Him as the supreme one. Poets, musicians and other artists are the pet recipients of His manifold grace according to Arul Nandi Sivam who is a great figure in Saivasiddhantam.

To the infants He is Kulandaivelan ; to the urchins Balasubrahmanya ; to the artists the poetic figure of Shanmukha ; to the valorous He is Devasenapati ; to those athirst for divine wisdom He is Svaminatha ; to the householder He is the consort of Valli and Devasena; to the saints He is Palaniyandavar. So in very many different forms He appears and appeals to the different grades of humanity.

MURUGA'S GREATNESS

Muruga's greatness is immeasurable. Many of His names explain the peculiar greatness of Him. That is why Nakkeerar says in *Tirumurugarruppadai* :

'அரும்பெறல் மரபிற் பெரும் பெயர்
முருகன்

" Perumpeyar " which occurs in the above quotation is an exact equivalent of the Vedic " Mahavakya " which establishes the identity of Jeeva and Brahma. So says *Sivagnana Bodha Perurai.*

The Tamil name Muruga is derived from "Murugu" which connotes beauty, freshness, fragrance, sweetness, divinity and joy. Muruga has all these characteristics in Him.

SIX FACES

Muruga alone has six faces. In Tamil the word ' Anju " means both, 'to be afraid' and the numeral ' five '. After five we have six. So also after our immaturity is gone and we attain the state of fearlessness we get at the six faced Muruga. ''அஞ்சு முகம் தோன்றின் ஆறுமுகம் தோன்றும்'' is a Tamil proverb.

அஞ்சுமுகம் தோன்றுமல்
ஆறுமுகம் காட்டவந்த

செஞ்சரணச் சேவடியைச்
சிந்தைவைப்ப தெந்நாளோ

says Tayumanavar.

'Bhagavan' is a word denoting God in Hindu religion. Bhagavan is one who has the following six Bhagas, or great qualities, *viz.*, knowledge, wealth, beauty, valour, detachment and fame. Each of these six qualities has assumed the form of one of the six faces of Muruga.

Though Siva is usually said to have five faces only, the real *jnanis* see within themselves an inward face of Siva in addition. These six faces are explicitly represented by Muruga. He is the Shanmata divinity comprising in Himself the aspects of all the six presiding divinities of the six sub-faiths of Hinduism. That is why He is six-faced says Chidambara Swamigal in his *Tirupporur Sannidhi Murai.*

"ஆறுசமயக் கடவுள் வேறுவேறின்றி
யான் ஒருவனே அங்கங்கு இருந்து
அன்பர்க்கு முத்திதரு வித்தென்று
யாவர்க்கும் அறிவித்த வதனமணியே"

Of the six faces one confers light ; another boons ; the third one protects the sacrifice of Brahmins ; the fourth one teaches the import of Vedas to sages and saints ; the fifth face destroys evil powers and the sixth face sheds love on Valli and is a guide to all householders of the world to lead a life of Dharma.

PADAI VEEDU (Battle Camp)

The six important Kshetras of Muruga are called the six *Padai Veedus* or Battle Camps* because Muruga is not only the greatest God of valour but He ever fights with evil forces and purifies the world. Though Muruga pervades the whole universe he is especially fond of the six *Padai Veedus*—Tiruparankunram, Tiruchcheer Alaivai (Tiruchendur), Tiru Avinankudi (Palni), Tiruveragam (Swamimalai), Kunruthoradal (many hillocks in Tamilnad) and Pazhamudir Solai (Alagarkoil). In these six *kshetras* the great qualities of Muruga *viz.* light, grace, austerity, Mantra—shakti, easy accessibility and omnipresence are embodied—according to *Tirumurugarruppadai.* They signify the six plexus in the human body through which life-force gets up to unite with the Supreme.

FORMS OF MURUGA

Muruga out of His free will and out of His grace for devotees takes numerous forms, each with a different name. The following 16 are important.

1. Jnana Sakti Dhara.
2. Skandasvami.
3. Devasenapati.
4. Subrahmanya.
5. Gajavahana.
6. Saravanabhava.
7. Karthikeya.
8. Kumara.
9. Shanmukha.
10. Tarakantaka.
11. Senapati.
12. Brahma Sasta.
13. Valli Kalyanasundara.
14. Balasubrahmanya.
15. Kraunch-Bhedana.
16. Sikhi Vahana.

Besides this, *Kumara Tantra* and *Shri Tattva Nidhi* speak of His forms as Agnijatha, Saurabheya, Gangeya, Guha and Brahmachari. All these forms denote His beauty of form and heart.

SAT-CHIT-ANANDA

The basis of scriptures of Hinduism *viz.*, Vedas and Upanishads speak of the supreme one as Sat (Truth), Chit (Knowledge) and Ananda (Joy). Sat is embodied by Siva ; Chit by Siva's consort, the divine mother, Sakti. Ananda is Muruga.

God is the simple beauty of the rare Self-experience (*அருமையில் எளிய அழகே போற்றி*) says Manikkavachaka.

Siva is the rare Experience ; Sakti is simplicity and Muruga is its beauty. Perhaps the three principles of truth, goodness and beauty spoken of by Westerners may also be said to be personified by Siva, Sakti and Muruga respectively. In all the temples of Siva we have the image of Somaskanda which consists of Siva, Sakti and Muruga, where Muruga is placed between His parents Siva and Sakti. It is said that by offering worship to Somaskanda the family unit consisting of parents and children is blessed with plenty and prosperity. While in every temple of Siva we have these images, in the great city of Kanchipuram, temples dedicated to these three Gods are themselves situated in the same order—the Kumara Koshta temple of Muruga is situated in between the temples of Ekamranatha Siva and Sri Kamakshi (Divine Mother).

SKANDAPURANA

Skandapurana which deals in detail with the sports and exploits of Muruga is not only a "biography" of the Lord but it is the

* Pictures appear in this volume.

biography of each one of us. In *Skanda-purana* we are told Muruga destroyed the demons Surapadama, Simha Mukha, and Tarakasura. They are none other than the evils of ego, delusion and action, which afflict individual souls. Surapadma signifies the evil born out of ego. Tarakasura signifies the evil born out of action and Simha Mukha the evil of deluded understanding (or misunderstanding). For getting liberation from Samsara, the evils of action should be first rooted out. So Muruga first killed Tarakasura. Under the power of delusion, the individual soul does both good and bad deeds. Similarly Simhamukha, though a demon, had some good characteristics. Anyhow delusion conceals the ultimate truth (*avarana sakti*) and so is Simhamukha killed by Muruga. The evil of ego is eternal and can only be controlled, not destroyed. Similarly Surapadma was not killed, but his evil propensities were quelled and He was converted into the Mount (peacock) and the Flag (cock) of Muruga. That is, the enemy was converted into an eternal devotee. The Saiva Siddhanta truth

''இன்பம் கொடுத்தல் இறை,
இத்தை விளைவித்தல் மலம்''

is also borne testimony to by this legend of the cock and the peacock.

Ignorance can be cleared only by knowledge. Ego is ignorance. Surapadma, the personification of Ego was controlled by the Spear (Vel) of Muruga which is His divine knowledge. God has three powers, Jnana, Iccha, and Kriya. Muruga's spear is Jnana and His two consorts Valli and Devasena are Iccha and Kriya. It is also said that the peacock is a symbol of Bindu (primordial form), and the cock a symbol of Nada (primordial sound).

VALLI—DEVASENA

Old Tamil literature speaking of domestic life refers to love after marriage and love before marriage. These two are respectively denoted by the episodes of Devasena and Valli respectively. Valli lives among hunters just as the soul living among the cruel senses. Like the Guru who liberates the soul from senses, Muruga liberated Valli from hunters. Arunagiri says that Muruga prostrates at the feet of Valli which shows the extreme meekness of the Supreme One.

DEVOTEES OF MURUGA

Among the great poet-saints who were deeply devoted to Muruga—Nakkeerar, Arunagirinathar, Kumaraguruparar, Kachiappa Sivachariar, Ramalinga Swamigal, Pamban Swamigal and others stand foremost. Generation after generation we have had great poet saints praising Muruga, from the very ancient times of the Vedas. In the *Ramayana*, Sage Valmiki says that the worship of Muruga confers great bounties. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Lord Krishna says that among commanders He is Skanda. Kalidasa has written about the advent of Muruga in his *Kumara Sambhava* which depicts the glories of the Lord. Adi Sankara hails Muruga in His great *Subrahmanya Bhujangam*.

Of all the works on Muruga the *Tirup-pugazh* of Arunagirinathar stands foremost for the poetry, music, knowledge and saving grace which it contains in abundance.

VELAIKKARA (வேளைக்காரன்)

Muruga knows the exact time to save His devotees and Velaikkaran particularly emphasizes this aspect of the Lord. Velaikkarans were the great warriors of ancient Tamilnad who took an oath that they will defend the King even at the expense of their own lives. Similarly Muruga has taken an oath to give succour to his devotees, come what may.

Even the wicked ones are reclaimed once they surrender at the lotus feet of Muruga. That is why Muruga does not kill His enemies but reforms them.

''தீயவை புரிந்தாரேனும்
குமரவேள் திருமுன் புற்றுல்
தூயவர் ஆகி மேலைத்
தொல்கதி அடைவர் என்கை
ஆயவும் வேண்டும் கொல்லோ
அடுசமர் அந்நாட் செய்த
மாயையின் மகனும் அன்றே
வரம்பிலா அருள்பெற் றுய்ந்தான்''

says Kandapuranam.

MURUGA, THE FEDERAL DEITY

Muruga comprises the essential qualities of all the divinities. Therefore by worshipping Him we can get the bounties conferred by all the other Gods. He is the son of Siva and Sakti, younger brother of Vinayaka, son-in-law of Mahavishnu, and is identified with the rising Sun. By propitiating Him the other Gods also are pleased.

Gnaniar Swamigal says that He is a Samashti (or Federal) God compacted of the essence of all divinities.

KALIYUGA VARADA

Muruga is the great redeemer who dispels the darkness of this Kaliyuga and confers eternal happiness on us who belong to this yuga.

CONCLUSION

Those who worship Muruga with love and sing at the top of their voice Muruga, Muruga —they get all the great riches ; misery could not touch them. Sickness keeps far off from them. With friends and well-wishers and kinsmen all over the earth, they enjoy innocent and worldly pleasures for long and in the end get release from the cycle of births and deaths and attain the lotus feet of Muruga:

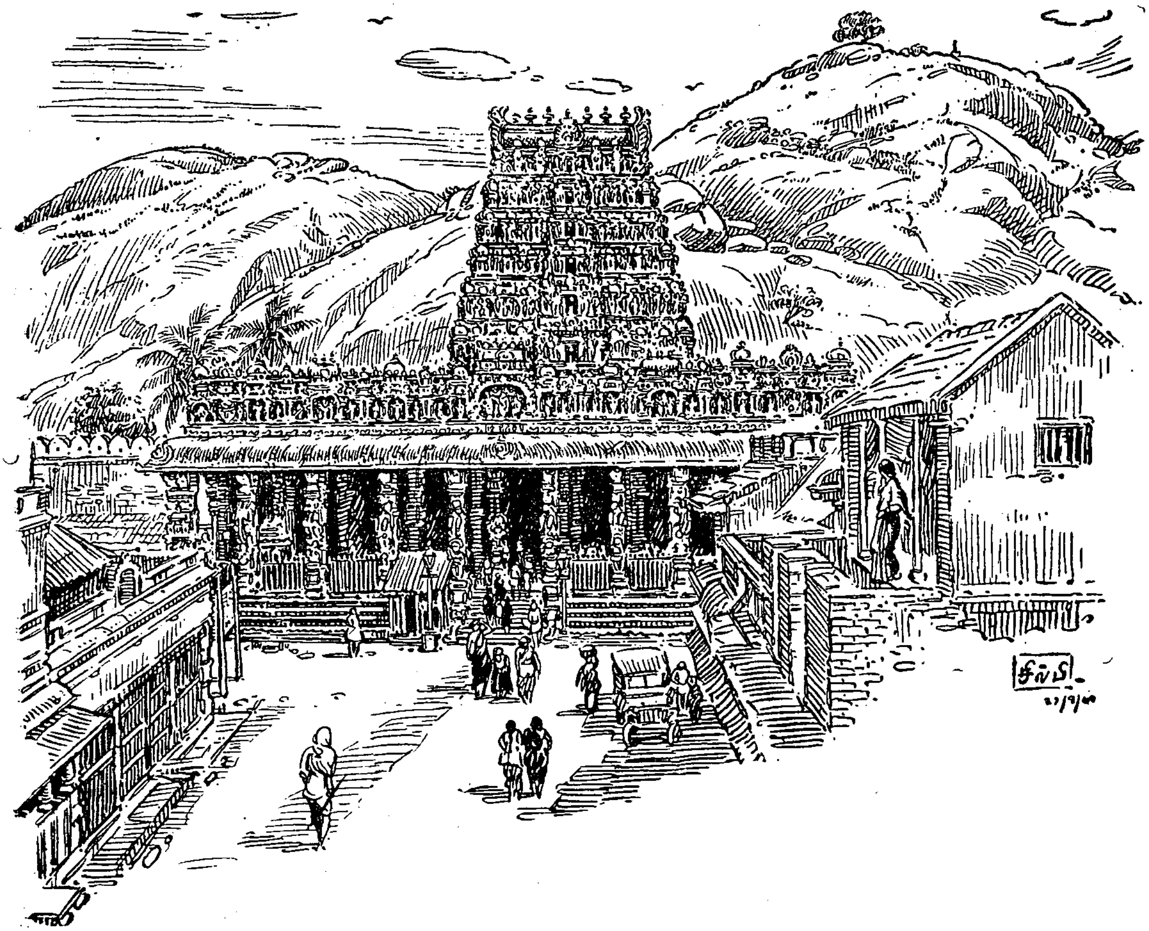
"முருகா எனஉனை ஓதும்
தவத்தினர் மூவுலகில்

அருகாத செல்வம் அடைவார்;
வியாதி அடைந்துநையார்;

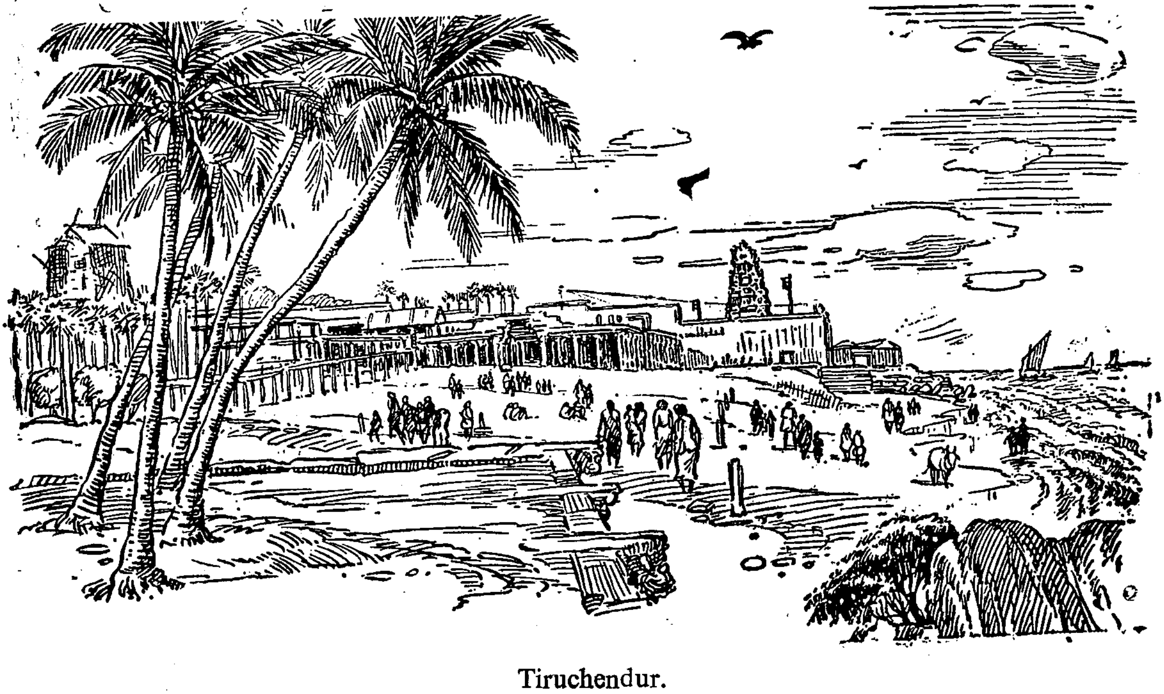
ஒருகாலமும் துன்பம் எய்தார்;
பரகதி உற்றிடுவார்

பொருகாலன் நாடு புகார்
சமராபுரிப் புண்ணியனே"

(Sri Chidambara Swamigal : *Tirupporur Sannidhi Murai*).

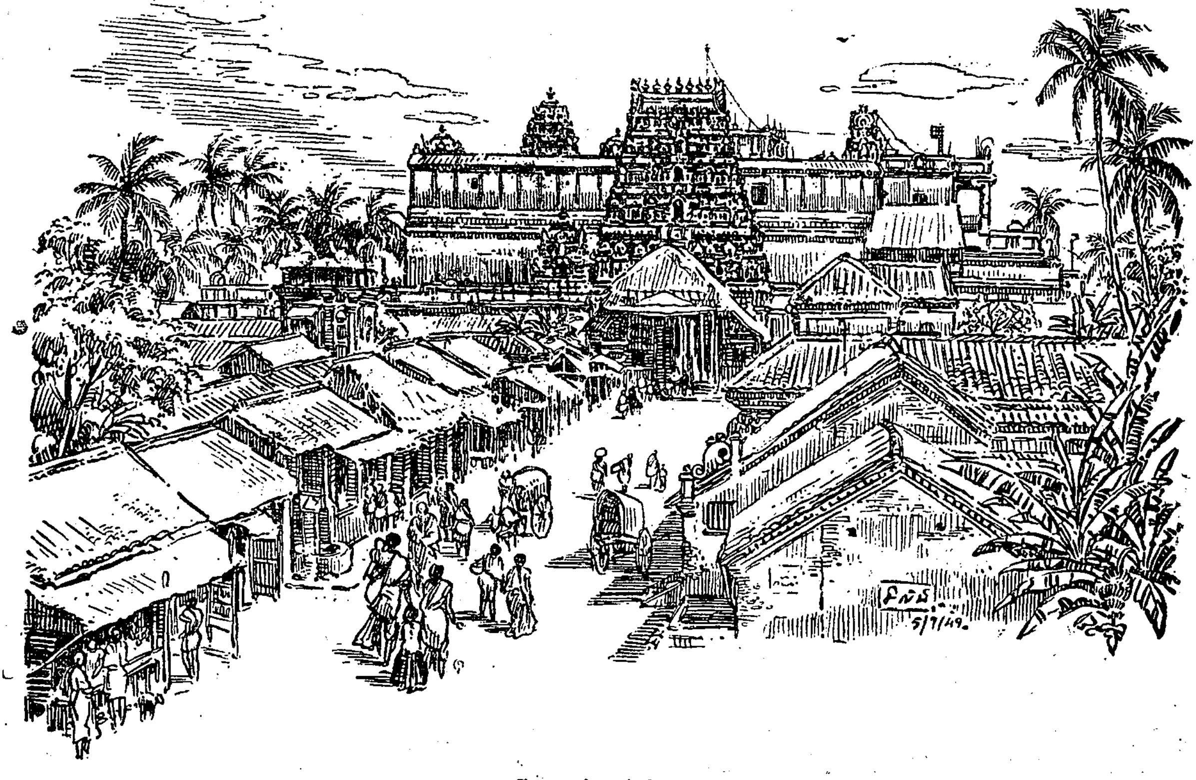


Tirupparankunram.



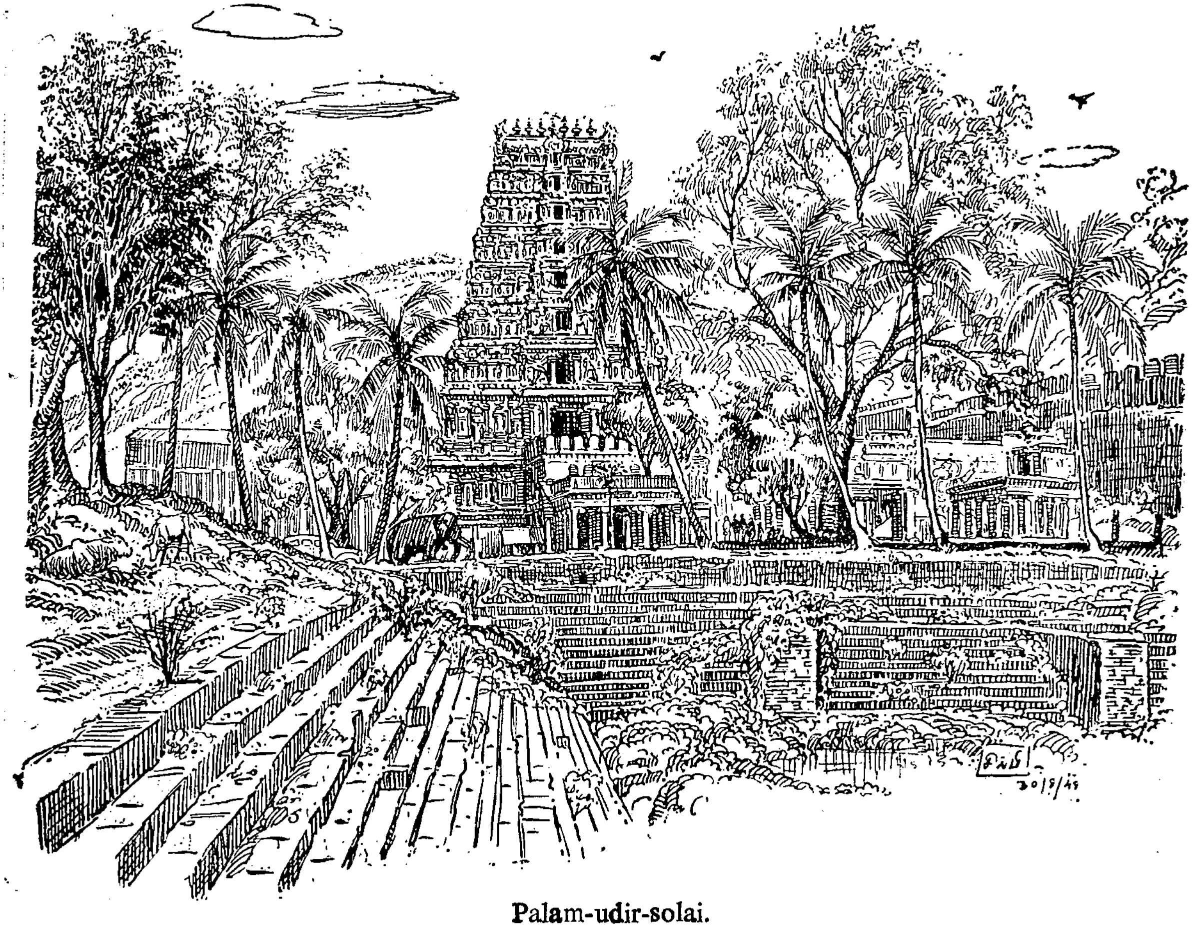
Tiruchendur.

Palani.



Swamimalai.

Tiruttani (Kunrutoradal).



Palam-udir-solai.

" SRI SUBRAHMANYA BHUJANGAM "

By

L. S. PARTHASARATHY AIYAR

Sri Sankara, the great exponent of the Advaita philosophy, wrote his famous Bhashya on the Gita, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. He also wrote the Prakarana Granthas setting out the Vedantic Truths in a simpler and easier manner. For all persons to understand, even for the common man, and with a view to fostering the sense of Bhakti, he composed many hymns (Stotras) in several metres in praise of various Murtis such as Ganapati, Devi, Vishnu, etc. which could easily be committed to memory and recited in the daily Puja (worship). Of them 'Subramanya Bhujangam' is a very famous and popular Stotra. It is in the Bhujanga metre with the gentle and gliding movement of a serpent, easy in style and melodious to sing.

It is addressed to Lord Subrahmanya in the famous Shrine at Tiruchendur. There are some indications for it in the Stotra itself. The Shrine is said to be on the sea-shore. There is reference to Patra Bhuti, a custom that has long been obtaining in this Temple till to-day, of giving Sacred ashes as Prasadam in the leaf of the Pannir Tree. There is a special invocation to Ganesa in this Stotra (not generally found in other Stotras). Dundhi Ganapati is in the vicinity of the Temple and is on the path leading to the Shrine. According to local tradition Ganesa (Dundhi) Murti is there from time immemorial and the custom is that He has to be worshipped first, before worshipping at the Temple. Dundhi Ganapati is sacred here as Dundhi is at Kasi Viswanatha's Shrine.

During his travels round Bharatha Varsha to propagate the Advaita doctrine and the six forms of Vedic worship which he formulated, Sankara visited Tiruchendur, and when he was lost in meditation of the Murti there, Sankara says, he felt the ineffable glow of the Divine presence in his heart, as One intelligence but six-faced, and lo! there flowed forth out of his mouth these verses of wondrous beauty.

चिदेका षडास्या हृदि द्योतते मे
मुखान्निःसरन्ते गिरश्चापि चित्रम् ॥ V. 2.

Out of his compassion that others too should share in his spiritual experience, he calls upon all people to prostrate before the Murti (Guha) and recite these divinely inspired verses with Bhakti and earn His grace, which would vouchsafe unto them not only long life and material happiness but also Skanda-Sayujyam (union with Him) in the end (verse 33). Sankara seems to indicate, as it were, the Path whereby to attain this Sayujya, as his chief aim is to guide us to God-experience, which is the goal of human existence; the path being

through Meditation; Praise and Prayer; and Adoration: भावये-ईडे-प्रार्थये-नमस्ते.

To help us in meditation on the Divine Form (Murti) of the Lord, he takes us step by step, as it were, from the external to the internal, from the outer to the inner. To withdraw the mind from its wild wanderings to which it is naturally prone, he wants us to fix our attention first on the Sannivesa (सन्निवेश) of the Lord's abode, *i. e.* the natural setting, and beautiful surroundings; the sea in front with its huge waves, the fore-shore on which the Temple stands, the Hill adjacent, the Cave within, Ganapati at the foot.

Ganesa at the foot of the Hill, V. 1. Ganesa will remove all our ills, mental and physical and crush the hill of impediments (विघ्नाद्रि). The word Panchasya is used in a double sense as meaning the broad-faced Lion and the five-faced Isvara. By using this pun Sri Sankara says that though elephant-faced, Ganesa is adored by the lion Siva. Reference in this Stotra to Ganesa may also be due to the part played by Him in bringing about the marriage of Subrahmanya with Valli by his appearing as a wild elephant and driving her into the protecting arms of Subrahmanya. The word Kalyanamurti (*Kalyanam* is auspiciousness, especially, marriage) seems to suggest this.

The fore-shore, **V. 4**. Standing on the sea shore the Lord proclaims as it were, that if our mind is firmly fixed on Him, we will cross over to the other shore of Samsara; and free from all fear, and safe and secure under His protecting roof, we can even look at the sea (Samsara) unconcernedly.

The sea and its waves, V. 5. The Lord holds out the hope to us, that with trust in Him, the miseries (waves) of Samsara (the Sea) arising one after another, tossing us hither and thither, threatening to engulf us every moment, will roll away and end in nothing, as the huge waves rising in succession glide down and melt into froth and foam.

While ascending the Mount Sugandha, V. 6. We are as though surmounting all sins and obstacles and are breathing the pure fragrant air of devotion and approaching His Presence.

Inside the Cave (**V. 7**). The figure of the Lord Kartikeya (Vs. 7—17) shining with the lustre of a thousand Suns, with the six faces of divine brilliance, seated on a Golden Throne over-hung with garlands of flowers and pearls, borne by the Peacock, wearing silk garments, adorned with ear-rings, garlands, bracelets and anklets, holding the spear (Sakti) and other weapons in His hands, with the Devis (Pulindesa Kanya or Valli and Devasena) by his side, with Crowns glittering on His heads, shedding His grace on all who approach His presence, removing all their ills and granting all their desires is described. May this form of the Lord Shanmukha always shine before us. Let us ever meditate with intense devotion on this Rupam (Form) of Kartikeya.

तवालोकये षण्मुखांभोरुहाणि ।
सदा भावये कार्तिकेयं सुरेशम् ।

As it might be difficult in the beginning for our unsteady minds to take in the whole Rupam of the Lord and remain steady in its contemplation, Sankara seems to indicate to us as it were, meditation in parts, *i.e.* part by part—the feet, waist, chest, the arms, the six faces, heads and body—with thoughts flowing in our mind with regard to them, in the manner indicated in the verses. I give only the verses relating to the feet and faces.

Feet. **V. 9**. O! Bee of the mind, why wander about in the scorching Samsara! Rest and revel in the cool Lotus Feet of the Lord. Like the lotus, it is beautiful to look at, fragrant to smell, soft to touch, delighting to the mind with the flow of the nectar of beauty and pleasing to the ear with the jingle of the anklets. (The Parama Hamsas always delight in Him in the lotus of their hearts just as the Hamsa birds delight in the lotus).

The six Faces. **V. 13**. The splendour of them! To what shall I compare them! If the full moons of Autumn, (six of them), were to arise at the same time, shedding their full lustre, rid of their dark spots and

shine around us, perhaps they may afford an object for comparison with Kumara's six faces. (Cf. *Gita* Chap. XI. 12).

V. **14**. Let me be ever looking at these lotus-like faces, bright with smiles, lighted up with the moving glances of the sparkling eyes, with lips red like the bimba fruit and dripping the nectar of compassion. (Smiles, compared to the white swans; black tremulous eyes, to the bees; lips to the lotus petals).

When the mind has been trained to contemplate upon the Divine Rupam of the Lord as outside of us, meditation of the Rupam inside of us should be commenced as shining in the cave of our hearts. The hill in this body and the cave therein are called in the Upanishads as Brahmagiri and Buddhi Guha. (Cf. *Srayamo Guham tam*—Subrahmanya himself is spoken of as dwelling in this cave—*Guha*).

The attributes, Kalyana Gunas of the Lord as well as His Leelas (divine sport), as also the symbolism behind His accompaniments or adjuncts or parts should also be contemplated upon. The six faces are to be interpreted and understood according to the context in the Puranic story relating to the Avatara and the Leelas of Subramanya; as the six sparks that flew forth from the third Eye of Knowledge (Chid Agni) of Iswara; as the Mahavakyas of the Vedas and Ithihasa-Puranas; as the Over-Lord of the six forms of Vedic worship (षण्मत-पते); as representing the six main Leelas of the Lord described in the Puranas; as the six syllables of Shadakshari Mantra: as the six ideas relating to the connection of Jiva and Iswara underlying the Basic Truth that Jiva and Iswara are but one and the same Chit (चिदेका); the commonly understood general interpretation being that the six faces represent His six main qualities (Bhagas) of Godhood (Bhagavan):

ऐश्वर्यस्य समग्रस्य, वीर्यस्य, यशसः, श्रियः, ज्ञान, वैराग्ययोश्चैव

(lordship, valour, fame, wealth, wisdom and detachment).

The twelve eyes with their glances should be interpreted as blessing the devotees with the twelve qualifications of Jnana, Satyam, etc., the Sadhana Sampathi necessary for attaining God-experience. With his Sakti He protects the worlds लोकपालः as the great Commander of the Devas (Dharmic forces) destroying all the (Adharmic) evil hordes (the Daityas) together with their three Chiefs: Taraka, Sura and Simhavaktra. He is the purport of all the Upanishads (महा-वेद-भावं); the Peacock on which He is mounted being the Vedas with their beautiful plumage of Vedanta Vakyas (मयूराधिरूढं). He is the secret or the inner meaning of the Maha Vakyas महावाक्यगूढं; Pranava is His symbol and He is its meaning (Vachya). The goat (छाग) which acts as His Vehicle is His Maya Sakti, the Aja of the Upanishads (अजामेकां लोहितशुक्लकृष्णाम्). The two Devis by His side are the two Saktis, Icha (Thought) and Kriya (Action). The spear in His hand is Knowledge Incarnate, Jnana Sakti or Brahma Vidya, pounding away into nothing the Krouncha Hill of nescience (Avidya). The Cock which is His banner heralds the dawn of knowledge (Jnana).

He is Bliss absolute, the plenum (आनन्द-भूमन्), the fountain spring of all other joys. He is Pure unlimited Intelligence (अपार-धामन्); the Light of all Lights; All-love; the state of Mukti or release from Samsara. V. 32.

Thus Sankara takes us as it were from the exterior to the interior; from the outer to the inner and inmost; from the gross (Sthula) to the subtle (Sukshma); from attributes to Reality.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES.

Forgive all my faults. V. 30. As a father or mother forgives the son. Thou art the Father of all the worlds and I am yet a boy, immature (Cf. *Gita* XI, 44). Extend Thy Grace to me. V. 27. Your

love is all-embracing. Unlike the other Devas who show their favour only to those who worship them in a particular manner and dole out only such desires as they want, You extend Your Grace to all, even to the out-caste. You grant not only their desires, but give away even Thyself (स्वार्थ-दाने) if only their hearts pine for You. (Cf. Bhagavata X 80-11. स्मरतः पादकमलं आत्मानमपि यच्छति)

The reference is to a story in the Kshetra of Tiruchendur that Lord Shanmukha granted Darsanam and extended His Grace to one Velan, an outcaste, as Nataraja showed His Grace to Nandanar.

V. 15. Lord: You have eyes, not two, but twelve, wide and long enough to reach the ear. Their glances are ever shedding their limitless grace. If a particle of that grace is let fall on me, from the corner of one of Your many eyes and for once, what loss or harm is there for You? (Cf. *Soundaryalahari, Sloka* 57).

Destroy my ignorance. V. 23. When You could kill the three Chiefs of the Daitya hordes, whose cruel might pervaded this vast Universe, will it be difficult for You to Kill this one single enemy of mine —*viz.*, Ignorance (Ajnana). If you cannot kill, to whom else should I run for succour? (Cf. *Sivanandalahari*, Sloka 58). And Your greatness is such that even at the mere sight of your Bhuti on the Pannir leaf all incurable maladies, fiends and ghosts fly away in an instant: V. 25. (The Pannir Tree is the Veda, its leaves being the Vedic Mantras: छंदांसि यस्य पर्णानि)

Prayer for Devotion. V. 26. Grant that my eyes see only Your Form everywhere, my ears ever listen to Your Fame, my tongue ever utters Your purifying Names, my hands ever employed in Your worship, my body ever at Your service, and all my thoughts wholly absorbed in Your contemplation. (Cf. *Sivanandalahari*, 7).

Grant that Bhakti, not only to me, but to my wife, progeny, relatives, servants and even my cattle (V. 28).

Give Your Darsanam at my last moments (Vs. 20, 21, 22.) With all my senses stilled, consciousness lost, body prostrate, limbs not moving, whole frame shaking with fear, life about to depart, none to come to my rescue—when I am at that helpless condition, O! Merciful Lord, be pleased to come before me quickly.

When before my vision appear the fierce looking messengers of Death, threatening with the shouts of "Tear him, burn him", O, Lord be pleased to hasten to my side mounted on the Peacock and holding the spear in hand, consoling me with words of Abhayam (माभैः) "Don't fear, Here I am."

When I am at the point of death, I may not be able to cry out to You, uttering Your Sacred Names. Now when I am in full possession of my senses, thinking of You, I prostrate at Your Feet repeating Your Names again and again and yet again, soliciting Your Grace and Protection at *that* time. (We are reminded of the famous saying of Saint Periyalvar: அப்போதைக்கிப்போதே சொல்லி வைத்தேன், அரங்கத்தரவணைப் பள்ளியானே; and of Saint Pattinathar; காலன் வருமுன்னே....................குற்றாலத்தானே கூறு.)

Adoration: Sankara asks us to pray invoking the ever-protecting Grace of the Lord सदा रक्ष मां त्वं, to utter His eleven Sacred Names, Kumara, etc. in V. 19, renowned in the Puranas as having special Mantric potency.

Adoration to Thee Skaanda; to the Sea Thou art facing; to the Kshetra (Sea-shore) wherein Thou abide; adoration to Thy Vehicles, the Peacock and the Goat: to Thy Flag bearing the Cock. Adoration to Thy Saktis or Consorts and to the Sakti weapon in Thy Hand.

Adoration to Thee and Thine, again and again. (**V. 31**).

पुनः स्कन्दमूर्ते नमस्ते नमोऽस्तु

Thus Sankara in this *Bhujanga Stotra* of 33* verses gives us a glimpse into His spiritual experience and shows us the path to climb to, and partake of, that experience, holding on firmly to the staff of Bhakthi at every step.

ओं तत्सत

* Three and three make six, so sacred to Subrahmanya. Who is six-faced and is meditated upon with the six-syllabled *mantra*.

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF KAUMARAM

By

R. NAGASWAMI.

INTRODUCTION.

The worship of Kumara-Muruga-Subrahmanya, as the Supreme is known as Kaumaram. Differing views are expressed on the origin of this cult. According to Tamil traditions the cult of Muruga is native to the Tamil country, as Muruga is considered the presiding deity of the Tamil language. The worship of Subrahmanya has been commanding greater respect in Tamilnad from very early times and has become a part of Tamil life. It is in this part of India that the worship of this deity is widely prevalent to this day. In the northern part of India, the cult of Kumara seems to have had its beginnings in the Vedic age. Some scholars trace the origin of this deity to the Indo-Iranian period, while there are others, suggesting a Mediterranean origin.

BIRTH OF KUMARA.

During the ages, many stories have accumulated relating to the birth of Kumara Subrahmanya. There are different accounts recorded in the epics and the Puranas. According to the *Ramayana*, Subrahmanya also called Kartikeya, was the son of Agni and the river Goddess Ganga. The *Mahabharata* calls him the son of Agni and Svaha, while the Puranas describe Kumara as the younger son of Siva and Parvati, the primordial parents of the universe. However it is the last mentioned that is widely known and accepted.

"Skanda is blended of aspects of Rg-Vedic Apamnapat, Trita Apatya, Soma, Agni, Indra, Varuna, Brhaspati, and Hiranyagarbha. Skanda is a Rg-vedic divinity affirming the immensity and the variety of Reality" says T. G. Aravamudhan in a learned note on Skanda. (Tassi -vol. VII, p. 129). In this connection the following needs mention. "According to the Vedas, Soma is the embryo of the waters or their child. Seven sisters as mothers are said to be around the child, the new born, the Gandarva of the waters. Soma is also spoken of as a youth. The identity of Subrahmanya with the Agni-Soma of the Vedic period has been accepted by other scholars as well. It may be recalled that Rudra is identified with Agni in Vedic hymns. This syncretism, probably gave rise to different legends relating to the birth of Skanda, though in reality they point to one and the same source.

KUMARA.

Kumara-Muruga is known by various names, as Skanda, Kartikeya, Shanmukha, Palani Andi, Subrahmanya and so on. Sakti is his special weapon and he is therefore called Saktidhara. In the Tamil country *vel* (the spear), is considered his weapon and he is called Velan or Velavan. After His birth Kumara was nourished by the Krittikas and hence he came to be called Kartikeya. He is known as Shanmukha or Arumuga as He has six heads. As the lord of sacrifices, he is affectionately

worshipped as Brahmanyadeva ; sacrifice is considered the symbolic worship of knowledge and hence Subrahmanya is known as the bestower of knowledge, worshipped by saints and sages. He is said to have taught the secrets of knowledge to Brahma in which aspect He came to be recognized as Brahmasasta. In the Tamil country He is also said to have explained the meaning of the mystic word " Om " to His father Siva and therefore came to be called 'Takappan-swami' extolled for having destroyed the terrific demon Surapadma according to Tamil traditions and Taraka (Tarakari), according to Puranic version. The Sakti—his weapon, the peacock (mayura) his mount, and the cock (kukkuta) his standard, are often praised. In northern part of India Kumara is worshipped as a Brahmachari at most places while at other places, He receives adoration with his consort, Devasena. In the Tamil country, in addition to Devasena, Subrahmanya is said to have married Valli, a huntress. Valli, Devasena and Sakti his weapon, are considered the personifications of Iccha, Kriya and Jnana saktis, *i.e.*, thought, action and knowledge respectively. Kumara carries various weapons in His arms, which were presented to him by various Gods, to assist Him in the fierce battle with Surapadma.

IN LITERATURE : (*A*) *TAMIL.*

The Tamils affectionately call Him Muruga, Muruga standing for youth, the God, a beautiful being and so on. He is also called Seyon, a child. The earliest surviving Tamil grammar, *Tolkappiyam* mentions Him as the presiding deity of the mountain country designated as Kurinji.

சேயோன் மேய மை வரை உலகமும்.

The Tamil classics, called the Sangam works, assigned to a period ranging from 3rd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D., carry copious references to Seyon and His worship. One of the verses in *Purananuru* mentions the ever victorious Muruga, mounted on a war elephant and whose standard was peacock.

மணிமயில உயரிய மாறு வென்றிப்
பிணிமுக ஊர்தி ஒண் செய்யோனும்-
முருகொத்தீயே முன்னியது முடித்தலின்.

-புறம் 56

The same work also refers to temples of Subrahmanya at various places.

அணங்குடை முருகன் கோட்டம்.

-புறம் 299.

வெண்தலைப் புணரி அலைக்கும் செந்தில்
நெடுவேள் நிலைஇய காமர் வியன்துறை.

-புறம் 65.

Besides the above, there are a number of references to Muruga in other works. It is necessary however to mention two works of the Sangam period, which have special bearing on the worship of Muruga.

(1) The *Tirumurugarruppadai*, the first of the ten idylls may be said to be a literary work *par excellence*, of the Kaumara school. Nakkirar, the author of this work gives in most sublime poetry, the various manifestations of Subrahmanya and the path leading to His devotion and final emancipation. The divine activities of the six faces are graphically portrayed. Six places also came to be specially associated with Subrahmanya : they are Tirupparan-kunram, Tiruchendur, Tiruvavinankudi, Tiru Eraham, Palam-udir-Solai and Kunrutor-adal. The last mentioned is not identified with any particular place, but all hillocks, where Muruga is invoked and worshipped. That Subrahmanya is the embodiment of knowledge and is worshipped by saints and sages as well as the hunters and others is reflected in this poem.

(2) The second work of great merit, also assigned to the Sangam age is the *Paripadal*, a collection of poems by a number of poets. A good number of poems in this collection relate to Muruga, and furnish valuable data about the legends and worship of this deity in the Tamil country. Almost all the legends known to the Puranic period like His birth, and other attributes, the weapons presented by various gods etc. are found mentioned in this work. Kumara is compared in this poem to lustrous fire. Some special traits mentioned in this work are that he was seated under Kadamba tree and wore leather chappals on his feet.

(*b*) *SAMSKRIT.*

In the Northern tradition the Chandogya Upanishad, speaks of Skanda as the Supreme Being.

तस्मै मृदितकषायाय तमसः पारं दर्शयति भगवान् सनत्कुमारः स्कन्द इत्याचक्षते स्कन्द इत्याचक्षते ।

Chandogya-7.

Panini's Vyakarana Sutra and Patanjali's *bhashya* on these aphorisms speak of the images of Skanda and Vishaka. In the *Kasyapa samhita* (chapter on Revati Kalpa), Kartikeya, Vishaka, Skanda and Mahasena are spoken of as brothers of Goddess Shashti. However, these four deities were merged into one Being in later times. This points to the widely prevalent cult of Skanda at the time of Panini in the pre-Christian era. *Kumara Sambhava*, one of the best literary works in Samskrit by Kalidasa, is devoted to the birth of Kumara. The *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* describes in detail the daily libations of a house holder among which we find libations to *Skanda* and his *parshadas*. The *Skanda-purana* in Samskrit (and *Kandapuranam* in Tamil), treat exhaustively the exploits of Muruga.

IN TIME.

Mention has been made of the prevalence of Kaumara cult in 5th century B.C. The various dynasties that ruled India, during different periods, claimed themselves as the votaries of Subrahmanya. The Kushanas, and the Kshatrapas who ruled North-West Frontier provinces of India were great devotees of Brahmanya deva. The coins of the Kushana King Huvishka feature Skanda and Mahasena holding standards surmounted by peacock. The Yaudheyas, who adopted the republican form of government and who flourished in certain parts of Punjab from 2nd century B.C. to 4th century A.D., dedicated their kingdom to Subrahmanya and issued coins bearing His figure and legends. In some coins the legends read "Bhagavan Swami, Brahmanya Kumara." The devices on some of the silver coins of the Yaudheyas show six headed Kartikeya and Kartikeya's consort Kumara devi. On the copper coins of this clan are seen the figures of Kartikeya and his consort with the legend "Yaudheyaganasya Jaya."

'In the Gandharan school Hariti is the presiding deity of fertility and children and depicted with tender feelings on face with children on her breast and shoulder. She became the veritable mother Goddess in Gandhara. Sometimes she is depicted as a four armed deity holding a long trident and waterpot in her left hand, a true counterpart of the Indian Goddess Parvati.' This probably inspired in later times, Uma carrying Skanda as a child on her lap as in the Somaskanda images of the Pallavas. A seal found at Bhita by Marshall shows a peacock with a legend "Sri Skanda Surasya."

The Ikshvakus of Nagarjuna Konda (3rd century A.D.) were great devotees of Kumara and styled themselves as "Svami Mahasena patighitacha." Temples dedicated to Kartikeya have been found during excavations at Nagarjunakonda. A two armed Kartikeya holding a cock and Sakti in his arms has been found in the same place. A similar sculpture assigned to the Kshatrapas is now preserved in the Baroda Museum. The coins of the Gupta emperor Kumara Gupta portray Kumara riding on peacock. The following epithets of the rulers of Chalukya dynasty will show their intense love and devotion to Lord Subrahmanya.

1. स्वामिमहासेनपादानुध्यातानाम् ।
2. कार्तिकेयपरिरक्षित-पितृपैतामह-परम्पराणाम् ।
3. कार्तिकेयपरिरक्षणप्राप्त-कल्याण-परम्पराणाम् ।

etc.

In the south, the Pallavas were worshippers of Skanda. In the list of early Pallavas a number of kings are seen bearing names like Kumara, Skanda etc. A number of copper plate charters of the Pallavas refer to them as Parama Brahmanyas, Parama Bhagavatas and Parama Mahesvaras. The Pallavas were often equated with Kumara.

यत्र उद्भूताः सर्वेऽपि सर्वत्र अविहित-शक्तयः महासेनाः पावकजन्मनाः पद्मोद्भवाः सुब्रह्मण्याः कुमाराः इव ।

(Kaskkudi plates)

Regarding the birth of the Pallava emperor Rajasimha, the Kailasanatha temple inscription has the following to say

सुब्रह्मण्यः कुमरो गुह इव परमादीश्वरात् आत्तजन्मा ।

KUMARA WORSHIP.

The worship of Subrahmanya may be divided into three categories (*a*) as the Supreme Being *i.e.* the *Pradhana devata* or the *Svatantra devata*, (*b*) on par with other deities *i.e. Samapradhana devata* and (*c*) as a subsidiary deity *i.e. Parivara devata.*

AS SUBSIDIARY DEITY.

Subrahmanya is considered a main *parivara devata* in both Siva and Vishnu temples and receives daily worship. He is

either provided with a separate niche (*deva-koshta*) on the walls of the *garbha grha* or a subsidiary shrine within the *prakara* of the temple. A number of early temples especially of the Siva cult, have survived that retain this feature to this day. In the Pallava temples of Kanchi, Subrahmanya is shown on the North wall, standing in Sama-bhanga, wearing a *channavira*. He is four-armed holding *akshamala* and *kundika* in the upper pair of arms which emphasize that he is an embodiment of knowledge. In some of the early Chola temples of Tamil-nad, as at Kilaiyur, Subrahmanya, is placed on the back niche of the *garbhagrha*, facing east. As a *parivara devata* Kumara is enshrined in a subsidiary shrine in the western quarter of the temple, as at Melap-paluvur. (In Kalinga Kartikeya is shown on the Northern Niche of the temple). Subrah-manya is also shown on the eastern face of the Vimana of the Siva temples sometimes on the *griva*. Almost every Siva temple has now a metal image of Subrahmanya, which is taken out on procession along with the main deity and forms the Panchamurti concept of recent times.

AS ASSOCIATE DEITY.

That Subrahmanya was worshipped as a *Samapradhana devata*, is known from early Sangam works. Siva, Balarama, Krishna and Seyon are often referred to jointly.

ஏற்று வலன் உயரிய எரிமருள் அவிர்சடை
மாற்று அருங் கணிச்சி மணி மிடற்றோனும்
கடல் வளர்புரிவளை புரையும் மேனி
அடல் வெண் நாஞ்சிற் பனைக் கொடியோனும்
மண்ணுறு திருமணி புரையும் மேனி
விண்உயர் புட்கொடி விறல் வெய்யோனும்
மணிமயில் உயரிய மாறா வென்றி
பிணிமுக ஊர்தி ஒண் செய்யோனும்

புறம்-56

In laying out a village or town, the Vastu texts allot a particular quarter for the temple of Subrahmanya which must receive worship with other deities of the village, that consti-tute the *devata mandala* of the layout.

A few small sculptured panels discovered in the Pallava territory, show a row of deities seated on a common pedestal. The sculp-tures represent generally Siva, Sakti his consort, Narasimha with Sri, Brahma and Subrahmanya. The sculptures have come from Munnur, Manimangalam, and Tenneri. These sculptures of early Pallava origin, were evidently installed in small temples and were worshipped. The worship of Siva, Vishnu and Subrahmanya together is of great histo-ric interest. This would explain the titles assumed by the Pallavas as Parama Mahes-varas, Parama Bhagavatas and Parama Brahmanyas. This would also explain some of the cave temples excavated by the Pallavas. The Trimurti cave at Mamallapuram has three shrines carved in a row. The first one is dedicated to Subrahmanya, the central one to Siva and the third one to Vishnu, while on the side of the rock is carved an image of Durga. The entrance of the Subrahmanya sanctum is flanked by sages, while the other sanctums are flanked by *dvarapalas*. It is evident that sages are represented in the place of *dvarapalas* as Muruga is Brahmanya deva (the bestower of knowledge). It has been suggested that Arjunaratha of the five *rathas*, might have been intended for Subrahmanya. The lower rock cut cave at Tiruchirapalli is of great interest. It has two sanctums excavated, one dedicated to Siva and the other to Vishnu, facing each other on the side walls. At the back wall are shown five panelled sculptures in a row, the centre of which represents Brahma. To the right of Brahma are shown Ganesa and Kumara while on the left are Surya and Durga. In this we have Subrahmanya receiv-ing equal importance with other deities. Incidentally this is perhaps the earliest survi-ving temple dedicated to the six deities which constitute the Shanmata of the Hindu religion. The cave was probably excavated by the catholic spirited Pallava genius, Mahendra I, in the first quarter of seventh century A.D.

At Tirupparankunram, near Madurai is a cave temple excavated in the reign of the Pandyas in 8th century A.D. The cave is equally of great interest as it has five sanctums, two facing each other on the side walls, and three in line on the back wall. The deities that are enshrined in these sanc-tums are Siva, Vishnu, Subrahmanya, Ganesa and Durga. Except Surya, the other deities of the Shanmata are given equal importance here. It is of interest to note that such a synthesis has been attempted at Tirupparankunram which is traditionally considered the chief abode of Subrahmanya.

AS PRINCIPAL DEITY.

Lord Muruga was worshipped as the Primordial deity—*Svatantra devata*—in the Tamil country from very early times. Men-tion has been made earlier to the indepen-

dent temples dedicated to Subrahmanya that existed during the Sangam age.

அணங்குடை முருகன் கோட்டம்

புறம்-299

That Tiruchendur was an important Subrahmanya Kshetra in early times had also been referred to earlier. The Tamil classic *Silappadhikaram* refers to the temple of Muruga as Velkottam. The Chapter on 'Kunrakkuravai', in the same work extols the greatness of Muruga and the worship of the same deity by the residents of hillocks.

As a *svatantra devata* all the other deities, including Siva, adore his greatness. In an independent temple of Subrahmanya, Siva and Sakti are installed in subsidiary shrines. This is reflected in a poem of *Paripadal*, in which, the temple of Subrahmanya, at Parankunram, is extolled. Siva Vishnu, Brahma, the twelve solar deities (*Dvadasa Adityas*), the Asvins, Ashtavasus, the eleven Rudras, the *dikpalas* (guardians of the quarters) and others are said to have descended on earth and resided at Parankunru, singing the praise of Lord Muruga. This is obviously a reference to the above deities enshrined as Parivara devatas in the *Svatantra-alaya* of Subrahmanya. This has the sanction of *Vastu Sastras*, and may be considered the full-flown Kaumara concept.

மண்மிசை யவிழ்துழாய் மலர்தரு செல்வத்துப்
புண்மிசைக் கொடியோனும் புங்கவ
மூர்வோனும்
மலர்மிசை முதல்வனும் மற்றவனிடைத்
தோன்றி
உலகிரு ளகற்றிய பதின்மரு மிருவரும்
மருந்துரை யிருவருந் திருந்துநூ லெண்மரும்
ஆதிரைமுதல் வனிற் கிளந்த
நாதர்பன் னொருவரு நன்றிசை காப்போரும்
யாவரும் பிறரு மமரரு மவுணரும்
மேவரு முதுமொழி விழுத்தவ முதல்வரும்
பற்று கின்றுநின் காரணமாகப்
பரங்குன் றிமயக்குன்ற நிகர்க்கும்

பரிபாடல்-8

A number of independent temples, dedicated to Subrahmanya have survived in the Tamil country from at least 8th century A.D., while the earlier ones have undergone modifications. A cave excavated for Subrahmanya, with probably Valli as his consort is found at Anamalai, near Madurai. Another cave temple exclusively dedicated to Subrahmanya is found at Kalugumalai in Tirunelveli District. An early Chola temple at Kannanur near Pudukkottai, and another at Uttaramerur near Madras, have Subrahmanya temples of the Chola period. A number of other temples need listing.

Besides the early surviving temples, the other haloed temples, have been renovated and enlarged in subsequent periods. A number of new temples have also gradually been assuming importance during the past few centuries. The worship of Subrahmanya, has received great impetus due to the stirring poems called *Tiruppugazh* of the saint Arunagiri, a contemporary of King Prabudadevaraya of the Vijayanagara dynasty. The temples of Palani, Swamimalai, Tiruttani and others attract large number of pilgrims throughout the year.

BRONZES.

There are a number of early Chola Bronzes of exquisite beauty, of which, the image of Subrahmanya at Gangaikondacholapuram is a superb specimen of 11th century A.D. (See Facing Page.)

REASONS FOR WORSHIP.

Kumara is worshipped by devotees for special reasons besides the common ones. In Maharashtra, the women folk are said to be afraid of going to the temple of Kartikeya. It is not possible to say how this belief is current in that part of the country. In Bengal Kartikeya is worshipped by *ganika* girls of till recent times who propitiated Lord Kumara on a particular night of the year.

In the Tamil country, Muruga is adored for various reasons. The religious text dealing with worship of Muruga is called *Kumara tantra*. Muruga is propitiated by Kuravas for rains. They dance the *Kuravai Koottu*, for this purpose. The grains obtained from the first crops are offered to Muruga. Kumara was adored by girls for getting beautiful husbands. Married women adore Him so that their husbands may bestow affectionate love on them. Kumara is also worshipped for begetting a child. Women whose husbands were in the battle front propitiate Muruga, praying for the victorious return of their husbands. While these are the ephemeral requests, the ultimate aim of worshipping Muruga is not the fulfilment of fleeting pleasures, but the benefaction of righteous conduct, devotion and Divine grace—as echoed by *Paripadal*.

யாஅம் இரப்பவை

பொருளும் பொன்னும் போகமும் அல்
அருளும் அன்பும் அறனும் மூன்றும்-
உருள் இணர்க் கடம்பின் ஒலி தாரோயே

பரிபாடல்-5

VAISHNAVAM

(THE FAITH OF VISHNU)

सन्तापघ्नं सकलजगतां शार्ङ्गचापाभिरामं
लक्ष्मीविद्युल्लसितमतसीगुच्छसच्छायकायम् ।
वैकुण्ठाख्यं मुनिजनमनश्चातकानां शरण्यं
कारुण्यापं त्रिदशपरिषत् कालमेघं ददर्श ॥
(भोजचम्पू)

Vishnu dispels the heart-burns of all the creatures of the universe. Only the rain-cloud can alleviate the burning pain of scorched earth. That is why Vishnu takes the dark colour of rain cloud—कालमेघं *as the poem above from Bhoja's* Champu *says. This rain cloud drives away heart-burns* (सन्तापघ्नं).

The rain-cloud is accompanied by the rain-bow. The cloud of Vishnu has in its hands the Sarnga-bow (शार्ङ्गचापाभिरामं). *We have the lightning dazzling out of rain-cloud. The Spouse of Vishnu—Mahalakshmi who shines like molten gold—sends forth shafts of lightning, as it were, from Her seat in the bosom of Vishnu. While Vishnu's bosom is deep blue like a bunch of* atasi *flowers, Lakshmi shines in it like lightning.*

लक्ष्मीविद्युल्लसितमतसीगुच्छसच्छायकायम्

The devas*—celestial beings—look up to* Vaikuntham, *the abode of Vishnu—and are thrilled at the vision of this cloud of Mahavishnu, with Grace for its water-content.*

कारुण्यापं त्रिदशपरिषत् कालमेघं ददर्श

The Hindu mythologies speak of the chataka *bird. It cannot take water through its beak. It has a hole in its neck, and can have a fill of water only when rain drops fall from above through the hole in its neck. One can easily understand the plight of the* chataka *bird, when it does not rain for long; and also its great elation when it showers at last. So also the sages who have sought Vishnu as the sole refuge, have anxiously awaited the drops of Grace from the Vishnu-cloud and are elated when drenched in the shower of Grace in the end.*

वैकुण्ठाख्यं मुनिजनमनश्चातकानां शरण्यं

—H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI

अविनयं अपनय विष्णो दमय मनः शमय विषयमृगतृष्णाम् ।
भूतदयां विस्तारय तारय संसारसागरतः ॥

Oh, All-pervading Vishnu, remove my arrogance and make me humble, control my mind from straying away, dispel this thirst after the mirage of worldliness, make me compassionate towards all creatures and transport me beyond the ocean of transmigration.

This is Sankara's moving prayer addressed to Vishnu in his *Shad-padi.* 'Shad-padi' is a six-footed bee. Sankara yearns to hover round the lotus of Vishnu's face through his *Shad-padi* which has six stanzas.

Sankara's devotion to Vishnu is of a supreme order. In his great *bhasyas* he gives Vishnu the especial position of Saguna Brahman (God with Attributes).

Vishnu or Narayana is considered the originator and first Preceptor of the Advaita Vedanta. The activities of the Acharyas of the Maths established by Sankara—in fact, of all the ten orders of Sannyasins founded by Sankara—are conducted with contemplation of Narayana (*Narayana-smaranam*).

The Sankaracharyas are said to be Saktas, by being at heart immersed in the ocean of Power that Sakti is; Saivas by their exterior accoutrement like *vibhuti, rudraksha, etc.;* and Vaishnavas while engaged in activities—for it is Vishnu, ever in repose, who looks after the activities of the world. (*Antah Sakto bahih Saivah vyavahare tu Vaishnavah*).

Besides composing numerous hymns on Vishnu, Sankara has also written an illuminating commentary on the thousand names of Vishnu (*Vishnu Sahasranama*).

It is said that he sent the departed soul of his mother to Vishnu's Abode.

One of his chief disciples Padmapada is said to be an *amsa* (partial incarnation) of Vishnu.

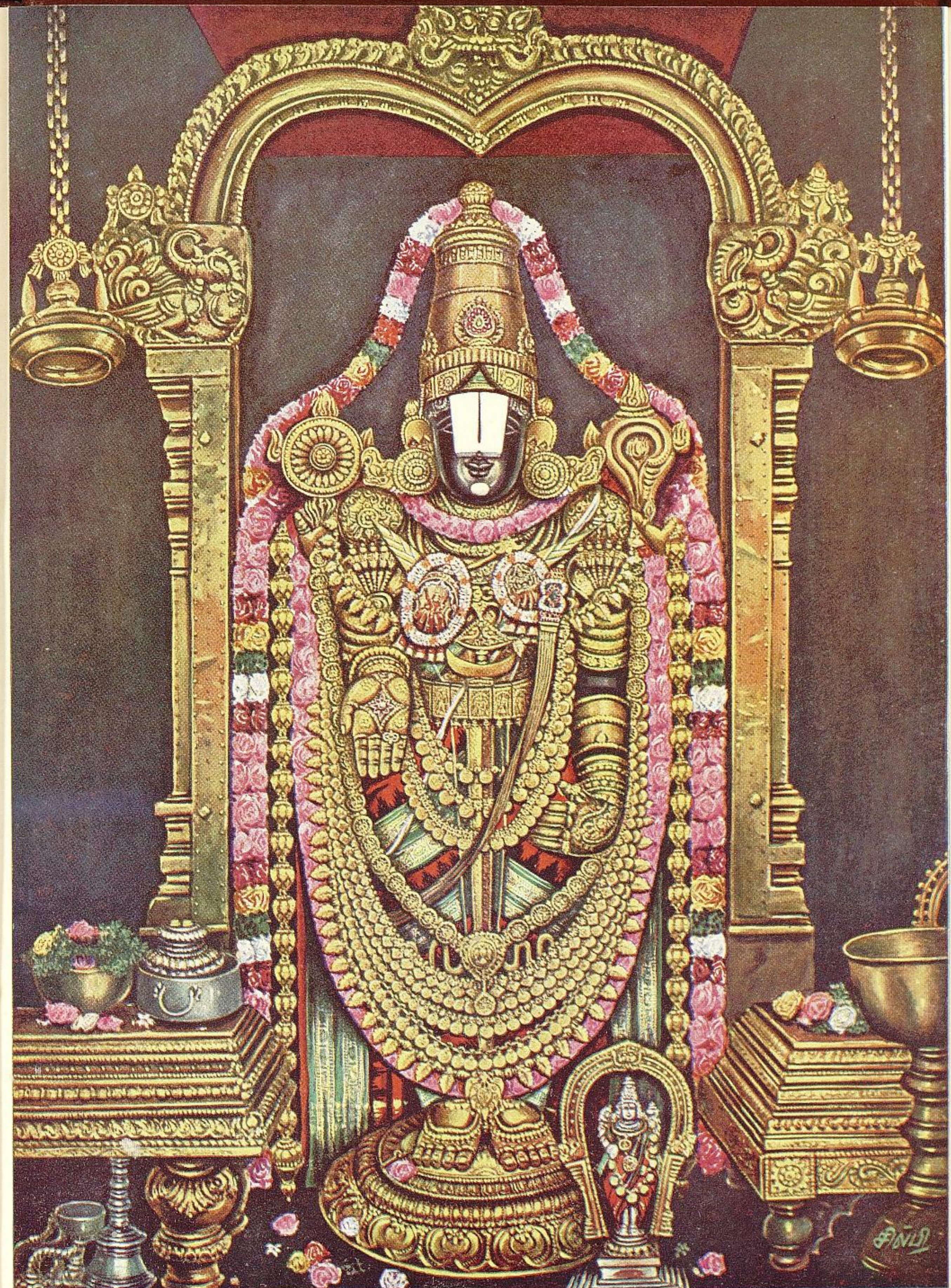
It is of interest to note that all the five holy places where Sankara established his principal Maths are sacred to Vishnu or His avatars: Badari (Narayana); Dvaraka (Krishna); Puri (Krishna); Kanchipuram (Vishnu as Varada); Sringa-giri (when Varaha lifted the world up, it was balanced on His horn—*Srnga*—and the spot where the tip of the horn touched the earth is Sringa-giri).

Even when Sankara speaks of all divinities as different forms of the One, he prefers to call that One as Hari (Vishnu).

"I offer praise to Hari Who dispels the darkness of transmigration and Who is the One Truth, conceived in different ways according to different temperaments as Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Fire, Sun, Moon, Indra, Air and Sacrifice." *(Harimeede)*

(Picture: Lord Venkatesvara of Tirupati)

Artist: 'Silpi'



THE CREED OF VISHNU

By

R. V. SESHADRI

Vaishnavam is a creed within the fold of Hinduism, which has unshakeable faith in the Scriptural Authority of the four *Vedas*, namely, *Rik*, *Yajus*, *Sama* and *Atharva*. Among the gods of the four *Vedas*, a prime one is Vishnu, which name means 'The All-Pervading'. What pertains to Vishnu is Vaishnavam. Vishnu, though spoken of as a god in the *Vedas*, is treated of as the Ultimate Godhead by a large number of those who follow the *Vedas*. The creed called after Vishnu is Vaishnavam or Vaishnavism and those who believe in it are the Vaishnavas.

Creation is said to be the emanation of Vishnu. Not that, what was created was non-existent; it was existent but in a form that could not be identified. Symbolically it was called Water, because Water has no definite shape and takes the form of whatever it is contained in. It was Indeterminateness, in essence. On this, symbolically again, lay 'the Recumbent One on Water', Narayana. In a season of inertness, the 'All-Pervader' is Narayana, lying recumbent, wholly inactive, on Chaos, that is Water. When he casts off that inertness, energy grows alive in him, Creation starts and he is Vishnu manifest. So it is that Vishnu is also Narayana.

In several places, the *vedas* describe Vishnu or Narayana, as the supreme among all the gods.

> " Eko Ha Vai Narayana Aseet Na Brahma Nesanah Neme Dyavaprithivee "
>
> (There was only Narayana, not Brahma nor Siva, nor the sky nor the earth);

is a passage from the *Vedas*. It evidently refers to the period before Creation, when Narayana or Vishnu alone existed as the 'Sole Supreme',—otherwise called 'Tat Ekam' meaning 'That One'. Another passage declares:

> " Narayanaparam Brahma Tattvam Narayanah Parah ".
>
> (Narayana is the Ultimate Reality, Narayana is the highest Truth).

Yet another passage extols him thus:

> " Tamisvaranam Paramam Mahesvaram Tam Daivatanam Paramam Cha Daivatam" (Let us worship Him who is the Supreme Lord of all the lords and the supreme God of all the gods).

Because of these and numerous other similar passages, Lord Vishnu is accepted as the Ultimate Reality by large sections of people who are known as Vaishnavas and their creed Vaishnavam became popular from Vedic times.

The last portions of the *Vedas* are called the *Upanishads*. In them the Ultimate Reality is dealt with and is termed 'Brahman'. Based on the *Upanishads*, Sage Vyasa wrote the classical work, *Brahmasutram*, which deals *in extenso* with the Ultimate Reality called *Brahman*. This work has been commented upon from very early times by sages and preceptors known as *Acharyas*, many of whom are of opinion that *Brahman*

or Ultimate Reality is none else than Lord Narayana or Vishnu Himself, who has been described by the *Vedas* as God *par excellence.*

" Patim Visvasyatmesvaram Sasvatam
Sivamachyutam ".

(Him who is Lord of the Universe as also Lord of Himself, eternal, auspicious and unfailing prop).

The *Brahmasutram* serves as the exhaustive digest of Vedic theism and several philosophical systems have grown out of it in accordance with the different interpretations to which it has lent itself.

After the *Vedas*—the *Agamas*, the *Smritis*, the *Itihasas* and the *Puranas* came into being, of which the last three were written by sages. The purpose of all these is to explain, clarify, elucidate and interpret the *Vedas*, and, therefore, the Supreme Being. They speak of God as personal. Here is a change in the view-point of God in Hinduism. On the one hand, God is impersonal. He is so impersonal that He has not even a name. Even the term ' Supreme Being ' is inapplicable to Him, for, the term itself speaks of a Being, that is, something personal. This is why the impersonal God in Hinduism is known as *Brahman*, which means ' Ultimate Reality ' which has nothing of the personal in it.

The *Agamas* are Vedic products speaking of God as personal. They are of many descriptions, some *Agamas* elevating an aspect or aspects of Godhood to the status of Ultimate Reality itself. Those which treat of Vishnu as Ultimate Reality and yet treat Him as a personal God are of two kinds, namely, the Pancharatra Agamas and the Vaikhanasa Agamas. Their authorship is attributed to Vishnu Himself. They deal at length with modes of worshipping Vishnu, in temples and even in houses. They, representing Vishnu as the Ultimate Reality that is, Almighty God, are held in very high esteem by the Vaishnavites and their authority is beyond question.

Later on, the *Itihasas*, or super-epics and the *Puranas* or epics came to be attributed to sages. The *Vishnu Purana*, attributed to Parasara, is, if thought of in terms of time, a very early Purana. It declares the supremacy of Lord Vishnu in unequivocal terms. His son Vyasa wrote almost all the other Puranas, the most important among them being the *Bhagavatam*. In it also is mentioned the supremacy of Vishnu and He is spoken of as the Supreme Being. Vishnu is spoken of in this literature, as personal God and as the highest among all the gods. The *Itihasas* and some of the *Puranas*, therefore, narrate at length the exploits and glory of Lord Vishnu, especially His *Avataras*, or incarnations on this earth. Of these, His *Avataras* as Rama and Krishna are very important.

The earliest and the most popular *Itihasa*, the Ramayana of Valmiki, deals with the entire life of Rama and the Bhagavatam with that of Krishna. Several of the *Puranas* contain the popular verse, namely,

" Satyam Satyam Punah Satyam Uddhritya Bhujamuchyate
Vedasastratparam Nasti Na Daivam Kesavatparam "

(True, true, again it is true, it is declared by holding the hand aloft ; there is nothing greater than the *Vedas*, nor is any god higher than Vishnu), and this again reiterates the supremacy of Vishnu.

Vyasa's *magnum opus* is the Mahabharata, which is the greatest *Itihasa* and which, dealing largely with the life of Krishna, declares in no uncertain terms that Lord Vishnu is the Ultimate Reality. More than everything else, it contains the Bhagavadgita, which is an immortal work based on the *Upanishads* and the *Brahmasutram*, having Scriptural Authority like them, in which the Supreme Being, incarnate as Sri Krishna teaches His disciple Arjuna the eternal verities. So important is the work that almost every school of Hinduism accepts it as revelation from the Supreme Being. If a school such as the *Saiva Siddhanta* does not accept it, it is not a rejection of its creed, but solely because of the inconsistency caused by its acceptance of Siva as the Supreme Being. Krishna declares that He is the Supreme God responsible for creation, protection and destruction of the whole universe. Says He :

" *Mattah Parataram Nanyat Kinchidasti Dhananjaya* "

(O Arjuna! there is nothing greater than me)

" *Vedaischa Sarvairahameva Vedyah* "

(By all the *Vedas* I alone is known).

So He is the Ultimate Reality. On this work many great Acharyas have written *Bhashyas* or exhaustive commentaries, accord-

ing to their respective schools of thought. Because of all this, Lord Vishnu is considered the highest form of Godhead. Speaking in terms of another school of Hindu philosophy not inconsistent with this line of thought —Advaitam—He is Ultimate Reality.

This line of thought was closely followed not much later by Bodhayana, a great sage and commentator in his *Vritti*, an exhaustive gloss on the Brahmasutram. He propounded the greatness of Vishnu and interpreted the essence of the teaching of the authorities above-mentioned including the Brahmasutram and promulgated *Visishtadvaitam*, a system dealt with lower down, as the essence of their teaching. This system was preached and propagated after Bodhayana by successive Vaishnava saints and scholars as Tanka, Dramida, Guhadeva and Brahmanandi.

In North India, several cults had been devoted to Lord Vishnu through the centuries, some worshipping Him as Rama and the others worshipping Him as Krishna. In the South, a dozen Vaishnava saints known as the *Alwars*, who flourished between the 7th and 9th centuries A.D. according to modern research, but at a very much earlier period according to tradition, were responsible for the spread of Vaishnavism. Apparently they based themselves on the teachings of sages of whom Bodhayana was one. They wrote sweet devotional hymns on Lord Vishnu in Tamil and their works aggregate to four thousand songs popularly called the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*. They translate, elucidate and interpret verses in the *Rig* and the other *Vedas* and in the *Upanishads*, the *Agamas*, the *Brahmasutram* and the *Bhagavadgita*, so much so they have gained a sanctity and authoritativeness equal to the *Vedas*.

After the *Alwars*, many saints and preceptors, known as the *Acharyas*, who had commented upon, summarized and digested the works of the *Alwars*, and had correlated them with Vedic passages, wrote several independent works of profound value. Based on these, Vaishnavism acquired a special importance in the South and it spread rapidly. Consequent on this popularity of Vaishnavism in the South, there was renewed interest in Vaishnavism in the North. After the *Alwars*, their mantle fell on the *Acharyas* in South India. The most important among the *Acharyas* was Ramanuja who lived from 1017 to 1137 A.D. He systematized Vaishnavism and made it popular everywhere. He wrote a learned and exhaustive commentary on the Brahmasutram called *Sri Bhashya*, which formulated a metaphysical system called *Visishtadvaitam*. Ramanuja bases his *Sri Bashya* on Bodhayana's *Vritti* and the Alwars' *Prabandhams*.

Sankara, who is said to have lived from 788 to 820 A.D.—thus apparently in the period of some at least of the *Alwars*—wrote a commentary, *Bhashya* on the Brahmasutram. The system postulated by him was one of monothesim and is known as *Advaitam*. *Brahman* is all-pervading and it is the only thing that exists. All the different objects appearing all over the world are but the manifestations of *Brahman*. Our ignorance and illusion called *Maya*, are the real reasons for our not seeing *Brahman* everywhere but varying objects instead. The soul or *Jeevatma* is *Brahman*. *Brahman* is the Ultimate Reality and it is devoid of form, qualities and paraphernalia. It is also the Advaitic view that the worship of Vishnu and the other gods is essential in the lower stages of spiritual evolution for leading man to the ultimate realisation of the oneness of *Brahman* and the soul, which alone is bliss or *Moksha*. Though Sankara's system does not need the exaltation of Lord Vishnu or any other Vedic god to the level of the Ultimate Reality, yet in his *Bhashyas*, Sankara gives a very high and honoured place to Lord Vishnu. This circumstance, perhaps, gives force to the view that Sankara established *Vaishnavam* as one of the six creeds called *Shanmatam*, each having a particular Godhead.

As against Sankara's *Advaitam*, Ramanuja propounded *Visishtadvaitam*, that is '*qualified Advaitam*'. *Brahman*, otherwise called *Iswara* in this system, inheres in the soul called *Chit* and matter called *Achit*, which are also eternal like it. The relationship between *Chit* and *Achit*, on the one hand and *Brahman* or *Iswara* on the other, is one of body and soul called *Sareerasareeribhava*. This doctrine derives from the *Rig Veda* in which Vishnu is the pervader of all that is. Says another part of the *Vedas* :

Yasya Atma Sareeram Yasya Prithvee Sareeram

Tani Sarvani Tadvapuh

(Whose body is the soul, whose body is earth, all these are His body).

The three together are called the *Tattvatrayas* or the truth-triad. Thus *Brahman* or Ultimate Reality is nothing but Lord Vishnu or Narayana, who has a form, and who is

possessed of countless good qualities and all the paraphernalia befitting His status as the Supreme God.

The Soul though pervaded as aforesaid is always distinct from and subservient to the Lord and it is in the position of a servant or *Sesha* to Him, who is *Seshee* (one who is being served) *vis-a-vis* the soul. Thus the relationship between the soul and the Lord is called the *Seshasesheebhava*. The Ultimate bliss or *Moksha* for the soul is to attain the Lord and serve Him in His eternal abode known as *Vaikuntha*, which is called the *Nitya Vibhuti* as contrasted with this universe called *Leela Vibhuti*, as this is the outcome of His *Leela* or sport. The means to attain the Lord is by absolute surrender to Him popularly called *Saranagati*. Everyone should realise the *Tattva* or truth, which is the Lord, the *Hita* or the means to attain Him, which consists in absolute surrender to Him and the *Purushartha* or fruit, which consists in attaining Him and serving at His feet. The essence of all the *Vedas* and the religious works based on them reduces itself to the five-fold principles called the *Arthapanchaka*. They are: (1) The Lord, (2) The Soul called *Jeevatma*, (3) The fruit of attaining Him, (4) The means to attain Him and (5) The obstacles that beset the *Jeevatma* in attaining Him.

The Lord serves as all the three kinds of causes for creating the universe, namely, *Upadhanakarana* (material cause), *Nimittakarana* (instrumental cause) and *Sahakarikarana* (auxiliary cause). The Lord has five forms, namely : (1) *Para*, the transcendental form in which He remains in full splendour in His *Vaikunta*, accompanied by His consorts Sridevi, Bhudevi and Neeladevi and myriads of devotees who serve and enjoy Him;

(So immersed is this school in the personalisation of God that it would even negate the possibility of a *Nirguna Brahman*—an Absolute without form or qualities. So these thinkers decline to think of *Nirguna Brahman*; they are content with *Saguna Brahman* (*Brahman* with form and qualities) as Ultimate Reality. So the five-fold division begins with the *Para* form.)

(2) *Vyuha*, the four-fold form in which He is reclining on His divine serpent Ananta and resides in the milky ocean, wherefrom He carries on creation as Pradyumna, protection as Aniruddha, destruction as Sankarshana and the emancipation of the souls from the bondage of the birth cycle called *Samsara*, as Vasudeva;

(3) *Vibhava*, in which He incarnates in several forms on this earth, chief among them being His *Avataras* as Rama and Krishna ;

(4) *Antaryamin*, the immanent form in which He pervades and inheres in all the objects of creation ; and

(5) *Archa* or idol-form in which He is enshrined in temples.

Any of these forms can be worshipped by the devotees according to their tastes and powers of comprehension. He reaches the devotee in the form in which the latter invokes Him.

The obstacles that beset the path of the devotees' attaining Him, are the thought other than subservience to Him; the idea that we can attain Him by our own efforts without His grace; egoism, etc., etc.

Thus it is upto man to invoke the grace of the Lord by devotion and self-surrender and get himself emancipated from the bondage of *Samsara* and attain His lotus-like feet and serve Him, which alone is eternal bliss or *Moksha*. By His grace even the past sins of man will disappear. This, in short, is the system favoured and propounded by Ramanuja and it is easily accessible to the common man. It is popularly called *Sri Vaishnavam*. In it, Vishnu takes the place, as far as may be possible for a personalised theism to do, of *Brahman*, who , in theory, ought to have no such form. So it is that *Advaitam* becomes *Visishta* or 'qualified' in this system. Many illustrious *Acharyas* of the Ramanuja School carried forward the torch of Sri Vaishnavism for centuries after him and even to-day it is a dynamic system widely prevalent in the country.

After Ramanuja, Madhvacharya, who flourished in the 13th century, was the champion of a system called *Dvaitam* meaning dualism, which was diametrically opposed to Sankara's *Advaitam*. According to it, Lord Vishnu is the Ultimate Reality and He is possessed of many good qualities. The soul is distinct from and subservient to Him as also matter. Man should reach God by devotion. Difference permeates the sentient and non-sentient so much so no two things or two souls are similar to each other. The votaries of this system are found in many parts of India even today.

In the later centuries the devotional approach to Vishnu became popular in North India. Chaitanya, Vallabha, Nimbarka,

Ramananda, Malukdas, Meerabai, Swami Narayan and a number of other saints propagated the worship of Vishnu in several parts of the country. These schools may be considered as the offshoots from the system sponsored by Ramanuja. All of them lay emphasis on devotion called *Bhakti* to Vishnu, which is many-faceted and which can be practised in any of the following ways: (1) by worshipping the idol of Lord Vishnu in temples and rendering physical service thereto, which is called *Seva* ; (2) by chanting the Lord's names repeatedly, which is called *Namasankirtana* ; (3) by singing the Lord's names or songs and hymns dedicated to Him by a group of people in chorus, which goes by the name *Bhajana* ; (4) by reading the epics or hymns pertaining to the Lord daily, known as *Parayana* ; (5) by getting oneself initiated in the esoteric symbolisms of the Lord called *Mantras* and repeating them systematically several hundreds of times daily, called *Upasana*; (6) by listening to discourses connected with the Lord, called *Kathasravana* or *Kalakshepa* ; (7) by meditation on the Lord called *Dhyana*; (8) by installing idols or other permitted symbols at home and perform rituals to them daily according to the instructions contained in the *Agamas*, known as *Ijya* or *Puja* and so on and so forth.

Thus the Ultimate Godhood of Vishnu, which originated in the Rig Vedic concept of *Tat Ekam*—That One—in which it is impersonal, acquired at the same time the personal form of Vishnu being the All-Pervader in the *Vedas* themselves, passed off as *Brahman* in the *Upanishads* and *Brahmasutram*, where again it is impersonal and ultimately emerged as the purely personal one of *Iswara* in the Agamic and Puranic periods, the two being inevitably equated to each other. The devotee is given the fullest choice of worshipping Him in any form that he is able to conceive of Him. Thus the recognition accorded to the dignity of the individual-devotee—and the respect paid to his viewpoint are indeed amazingly remarkable and grand. The Vedic religion is so much broad-based, catholic and democratic, that any view within the theistic fold can easily fit in with its broader aspects. Through the passing of ages, changes affecting the religion and the concepts relating to its several aspects, have been more and more in the direction of moderation, tolerance and progressive realism having the superb tendency of maximum accommodation and unifying absorption. This is how it was possible for several schools to spring up from the same root, similar to one another in their entire fabric, but differing only in the nature of Godhead. If Vishnu is replaced by Siva as the Ultimate Godhead, then Vaishnavism becomes Saivism. This aspect speaks volumes about the greatness, magnificence and uniqueness of Hinduism and the extreme liberality of outlook of its thinkers.

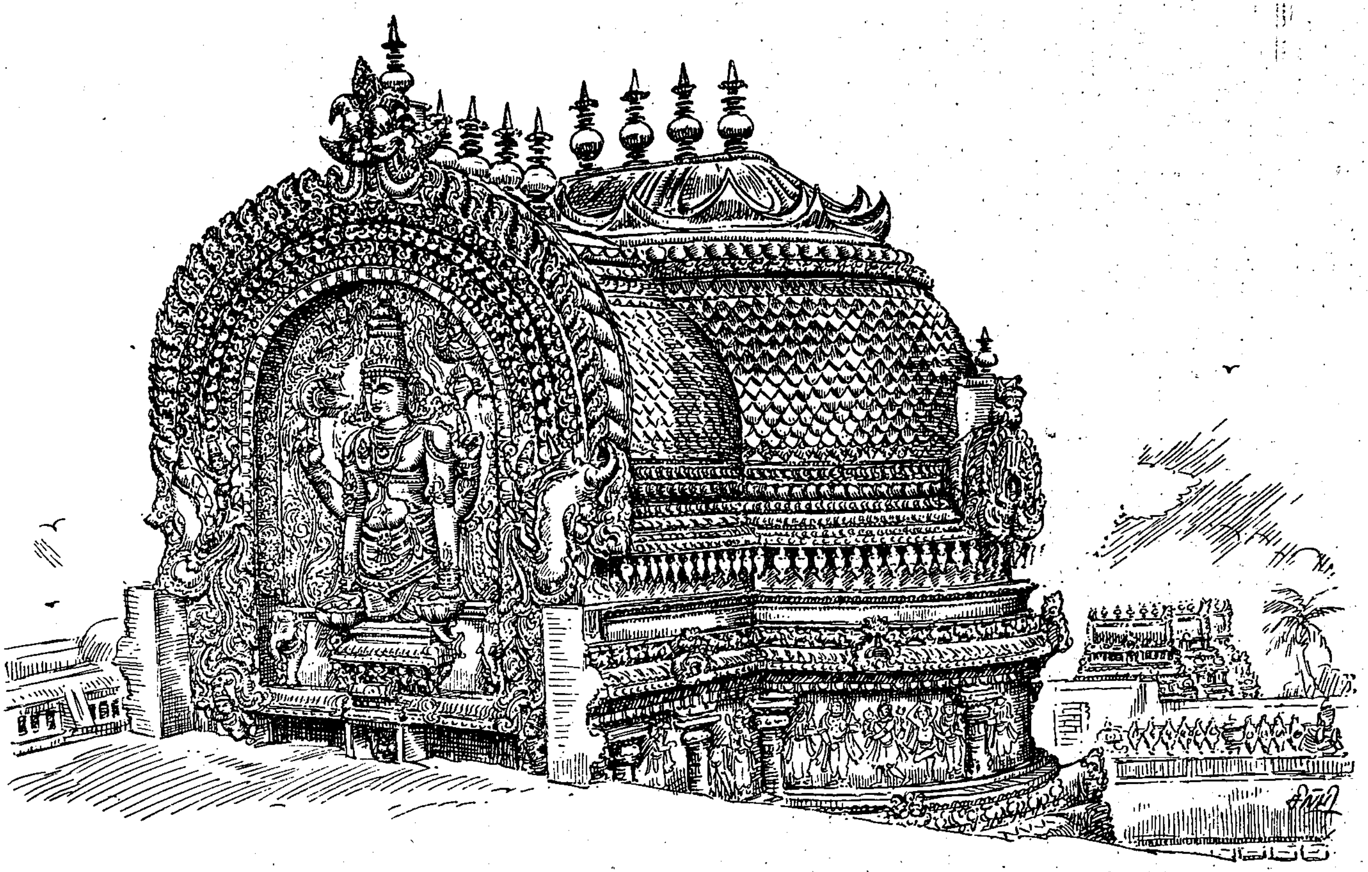
So it is open to one who is a Vaishnava to be a Vaishnava—though not in the Visishtadvaitic sense—and be a believer, at least in theory, in a Niruguna Vishnu. To illustrate this view of Vaishnavism, we need refer only to the beautiful verse from the Pancharatra Agamas, wherein the Lord is addressed thus :

Na Te Rupam Na Chakaro Nayudhani Na Chaspadam

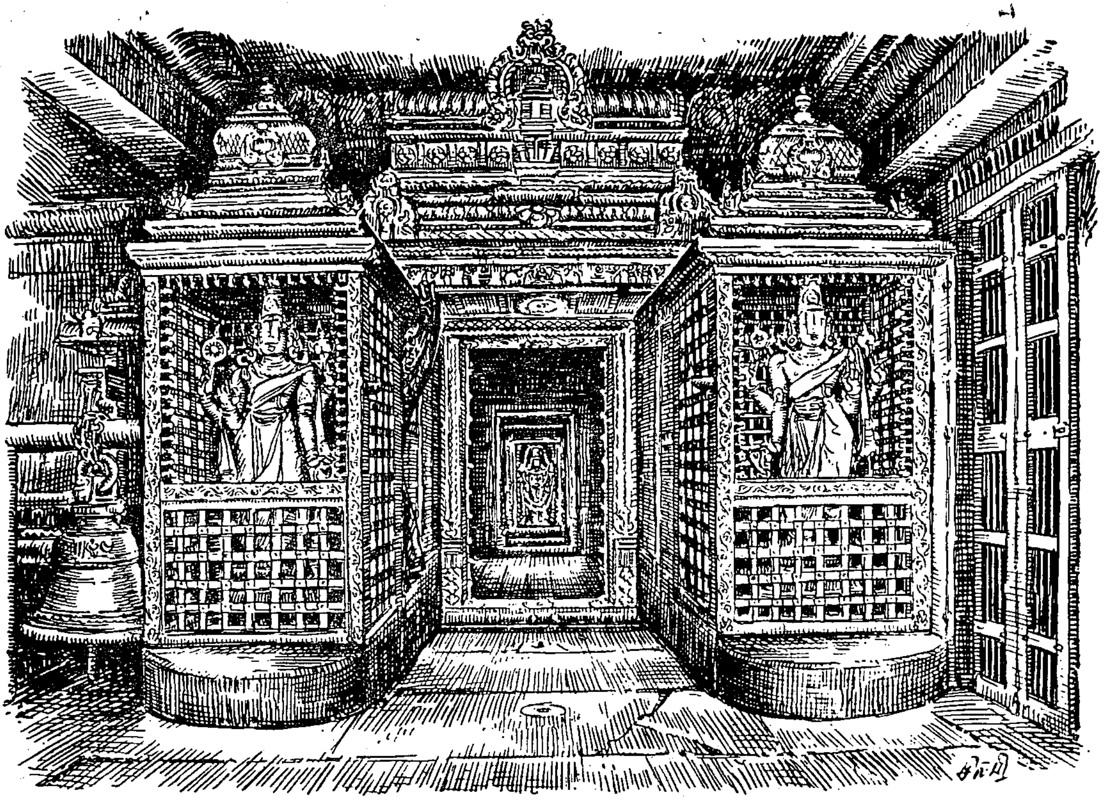
Tathapi Purushakaro Bhakthanam Tvam Prakasase.

(You have no form, no shape, no weapons and no abode ; yet you shine in the shape of Man for (the sake of) your devotees).

Thus Vaishnavam is a progressive creed and its growth through the ages has been indeed phenomenal.



Srirangam



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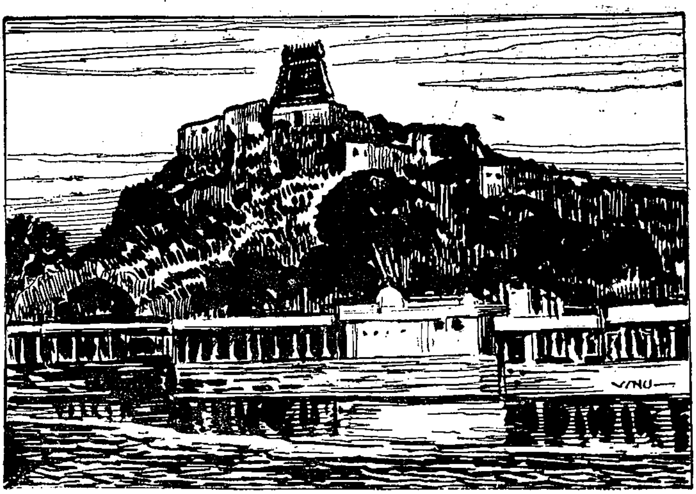

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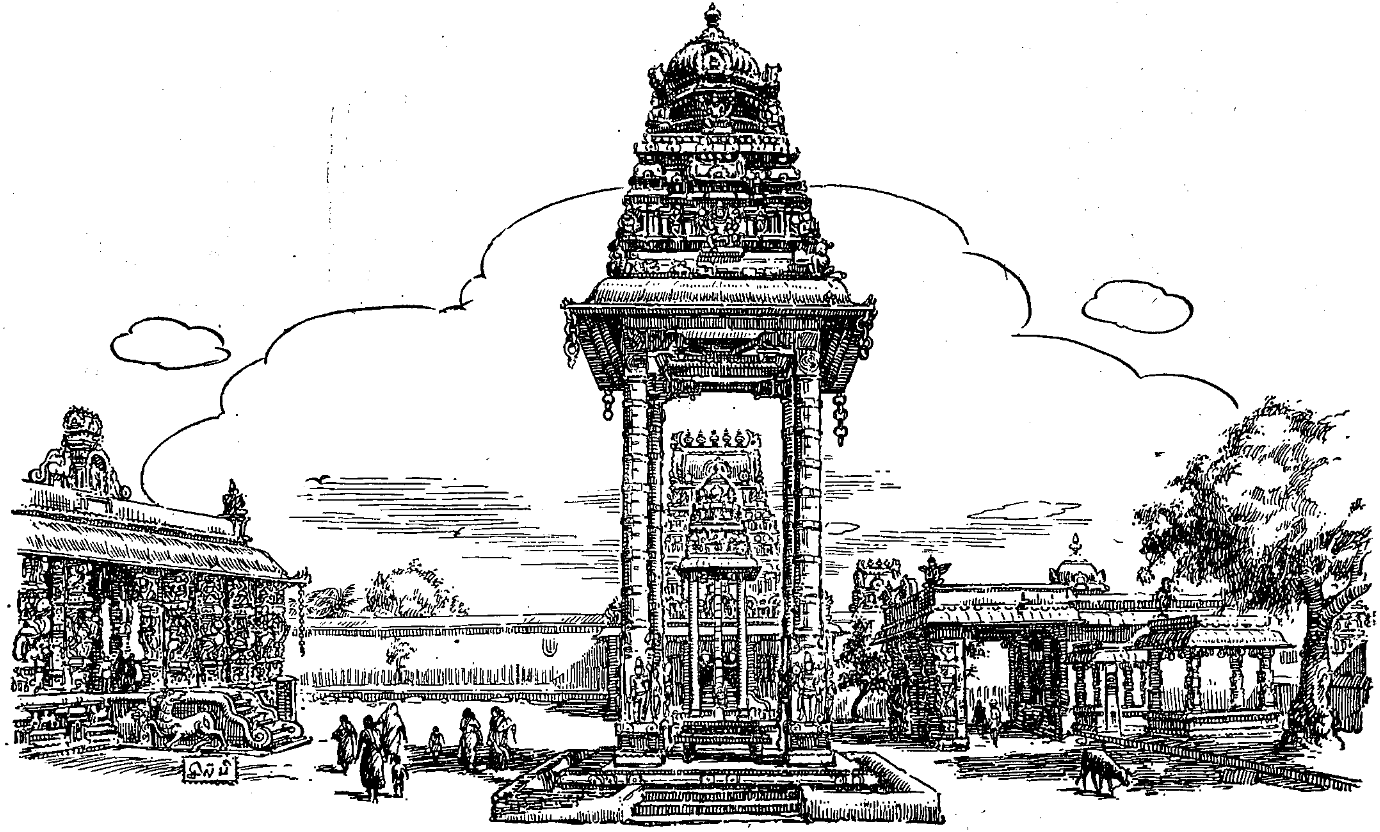


Kanchipuram.

BHAGAVATPADA'S HYMNS ON VISHNU

By

K. K. A. VENKATACHARI

Sri Sankara Bhagavadpada's *Bhakti* is of a high order. *Bhakti* is the best means of attaining the Lord. It is through *bhakti* that one can attain bliss. To strive to attain happiness even in this world of *samsara* without *bhakti* will be as illusory as the attempt to make ornaments out of the glitter found in shells and mistaken as silver.

शुक्तौ रजतप्रतिभा जाता कटकाद्यर्थसमर्था चेत्

That there is no other means of attaining bliss except by worshipping Lakshmi Narasimha is made clear in Sankara's *Lakshmi Narasimha Stotra*. I cite a few more examples of the approach to Vishnu through *bhakti* in many *stotras* of Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada.

One who studies such *slokas* will find all the ideas of Vaishnavam contained in them. In his *Haristuti* he surrenders himself to Hari who is described as one who is Supreme, who pervades the Universe, who is the personification of Ananda, who is the refuge of all the gunas, who is *avyakta* (unmanifest) and who symbolises *sat* and *asat* (animate and inanimate) (*vide* 3rd Sloka). Nammalwar also expresses the same idea in his Tiruvoymozhi.

What then is the path of attaining such a Lord ? As indicated by our elders शास्त्रज्ञानं बहुक्लेशं बुद्धेश्चलनकारणम् । उपदेशात् हरिं बुद्ध्वा विरमेत् सर्वकर्मसु ।। Sri Sankara also sets out to indicate the way of getting release from the world of misery, getting *sukshma gnana* (Essence of Wisdom) from our preceptors. This *sukshma gnana* should be strengthened by *vairagya* and *abhyasa* (detachment and practice) and by singleminded devotion to Hari (5th *Sloka*). Hari is all pervasive, He sustains everything and He is the all-knower, though the world does not realise it. He is the *antaryami* (in-dwelling spirit) of all beings.

सर्वत्रास्ते सर्वशरीरी न च सर्वः
सर्वं वेत्त्येवेह न यं वेत्ति च सर्वः ।
सर्वत्रान्तर्यामितयेत्थं यमयन्य-
स्तं संसारध्वान्तविनाशं हरिमीडे ।।

(*Sloka* 12)

When Sri Sankara prays that Lakshmi Narasimha should extend his helping hand in his hour of crisis, he describes Hari. Hari's feet are said to glow with the light emanating from the crowns of Brahma, Rudra, Indra, Marut, Surya and others as they prostrate at the feet of the Lord. (Vide *Lakshmi Nrsimha stotra*).

Sri Sankara's *Vishnubhakti* is clear from his *Vishnu Padadikesanta stotra*. His approach is that of a Parama Vaishnava, which is a Saparivara Narayana Pooja (Worship of Narayana with his retinue and insignias). He begins the *stotra* with worshipping the Panchajanya (Conch) and other weapons, then worships Garuda, Ananta, Sri, Bhu, and

finally the Lord from foot to head. He says that his heart revels in the *Murti* (Form) from whom the Universe emerges at the beginning of a Kalpa, in whom it attains *laya* at the end of a Kalpa and who cannot be comprehended by the mind (vide *Sloka* 25). He prays that the Ayudhas adorning the Lord's hands which are intended for protecting the world should destroy his *moha* (confusion).

He says that it is through Sraddha (Faith), Bhakti (Devotion), Gnana (Knowledge) and Sama (Control) that one can attain the Lord and through no other way. Through his *Haristuti*, he describes who Hari is.

Having dealt with his concept of Vishnu thus, it remains for us to mention the practical ways of attaining the Lord indicated by Sri Sankara. Particular mention should be made here of his soul-stirring *Bhagvatmanasa Pooja*. The Lord, it is said, who is worshipped in the Agamic way can be worshipped in our heart and in the form of Vigraha (icon). Krishna is requested to come down from the ocean of milk and take his seat in his heart so that he may offer *Argya* etc. Beginning with this, there is mention of *Abhisheka* (ablution—3rd *sloka*), adorning the Lord with *Vastra* (raiment—*4th sloka*), offer of *Doopa*, (incense) and *Deepa* (light—*5th sloka*), offer of Food and Tambula (*6th sloka*), *Pushpanjali* (flower offering) and *Ashtanga namaskara* (obeisance—*9th sloka*), and the *pooja* ends up with anxious expectation of Sri Krishna coming to him. This description of *pooja* is one which all of us can practice.

Sri Sankara emphasises his firm belief that the Lord confers all good to his followers and tries to ward off all evil from them.

The 15th and 16th *slokas* of *Lakshmi Nrsimha stotra* reveal this. He mentions therein that his wealth of Viveka (Discernment) has not only been pilfered by thieves called *indriyas* (sense organs) but that they have puhsed him into the cave of *moha* (confusion) and ignorance from which the helping hand of the Lord alone can save him. In the next stanza while addressing the Lord, he says that He dwells in the hearts of Bhaktas like Narada, Prahlada, Parasara, Pundarika and Vyasa and he also says

भक्तानुरक्तपरिपालनपारिजात

in which he asserts that He from His position in the hearts of the *bhaktas*, looks after the welfare of the devotees of devotees.

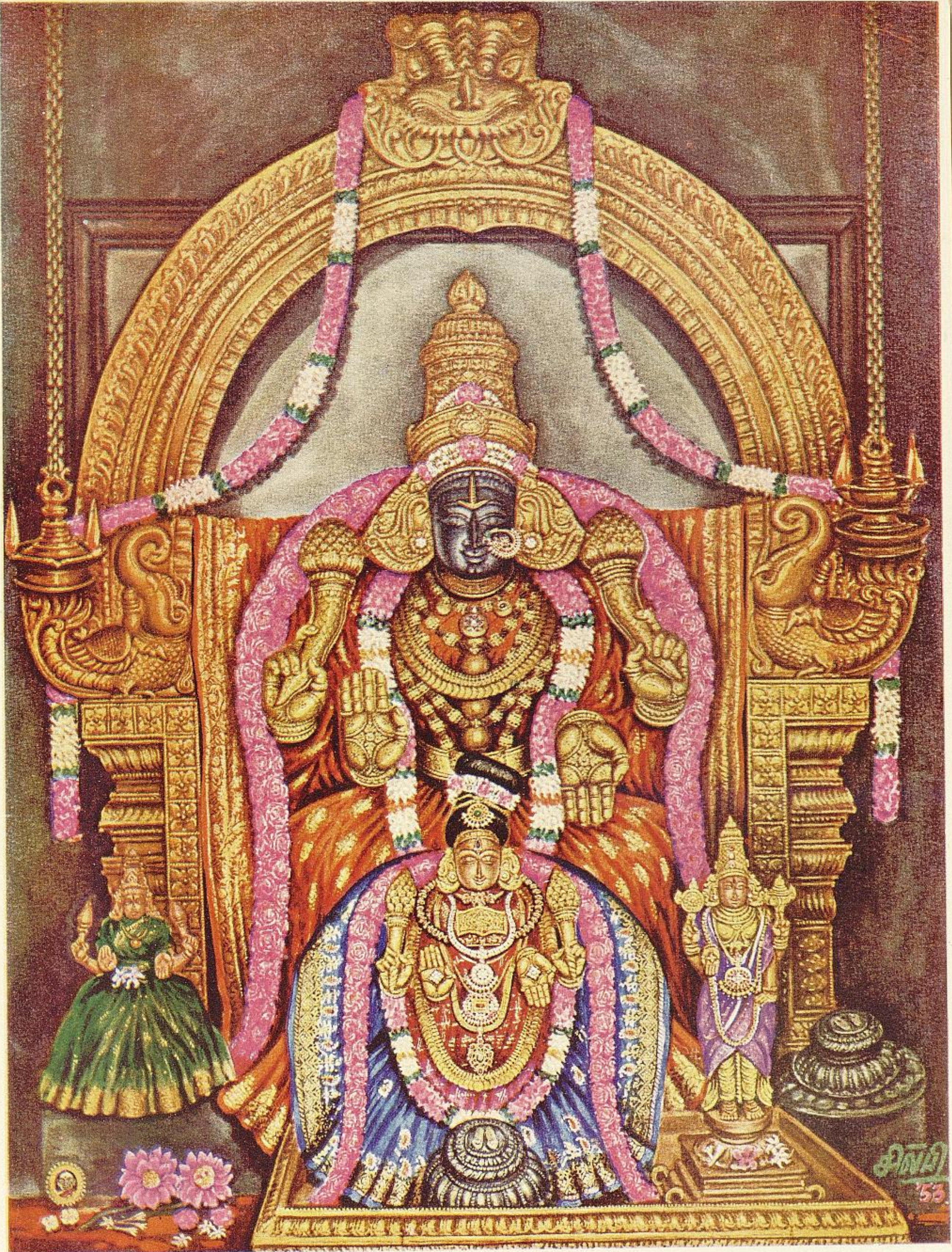
Sri Sankara's devotion to Vishnu extends to all his avataras too (vide *Vishnu Padadikesanta stotra, sloka* 49). His treatment of Lakshmi Narasimha, Rama and Krishna are noteworthy. In *Ramabhujanga Stotra*, he describes the exploits of Rama. The devotees of Rama are all blessed by Him. The *sloka* dealing with the removal of curse on Ahalya is noteworthy for its devotional and literary excellence. It is not surprising to know that the devotees get the Lord's grace, since even a stone was restored to human form by the mere touch of the Lord's feet ! (*sloka* 16). The next sloka extols the efficacy of Ramanamaparayana, reciting the name of Rama everyday, in assuring Heavenly bliss.

Thus far we saw Sri Sankara dealing with Vishnu in the *Saguna* aspect *i.e.* with Form. He also deals with the Formless *Swarupa* using Upanishadic and Vedic terminology. In *Vishnubhujanga stotra*, words like *Chidamsa*, (of the nature of Knowledge), *Nirvikalpa* (unconditioned) *etc.*, bring out this. There is a similar approach in his *Panduranga Ashtaka* in using the word—' Parabrahmalinga ' (Symbol of the Supreme) in every stanza. *Govindashtaka* begins with Vedic words like *Satya* (Truth), *gnana* (Knowledge), *ananta* (Infinite), *nitya* (Eternal), *paramaakasa* (Supreme Space). Stanza 37 of *Haristuti* includes the *mahavakya*—TATTVAMASI (That thou art).

Our treatment of Sri Sankara's devotion to Vishnu in all His manifold aspects will be incomplete if we do not mention that to him Vishnu is always associated with His consort Sri,—who finds an honoured place in the *Vakshastala* (broad chest) of the Lord and who is the embodiment of *Sarasvati*, *Bhu* and *Gauri* the consorts of Brahma, Varaha and Siva respectively.

वाग्भूगौर्यादिभेदैर्विदुरिह
मुनयो यां यदीयैश्च पुंसां
कारुण्यार्द्रैः कटाक्षैः सकृदपि
पतितैः संपदः स्युः समग्राः ।
कुन्देन्दुस्वच्छमन्दस्मित-
मधुरमुखाम्भोरुहां सुन्दराङ्गीं
वन्दे वन्द्यामशेषैरपि
मुरभिदुरोमन्दिरामिन्दिरां ताम् ॥

(*Sloka* 8—*Vishnupadadikesantastotram.*)



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अङ्गं हरेः पुलकभूषणमाश्रयन्ती भृङ्गाङ्गनेव मुकुलाभरणं तमालम् ।
अङ्गीकृताखिलविभूतिरपाङ्गलीला माङ्गल्यदाऽस्तु मम मङ्गलदेवतायाः ॥

Let the glances shooting from the corner of the eye of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Auspiciousness, who is compacted of all greatness, confer all bounties on me—glances which cause the blue body of Vishnu to thrill, like a tamal *tree horripilating through its buds blossoming as the bees hover around it.*

'Confer bounties on *me'*—But Sankara did not really pray through this hymn for himself, but for an indigent lady with a rich heart, who gave her all to him.

Sankara's *Kanakadharastavam*, which is addressed to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, is a standing refutation to critics who think that Sankara, by considering the world as illusory, was blind to the practical side of life. Sankara was never averse to this practical side. He actually enjoins on people to do their allotted work and make the earning they deserve. He was not against earning, but only against covetousness. *Yallabhase nija karmopattam vittam tena vinodaya chittam*—"Bhaja Govindam".

But, ultimately Lakshmi to him was not only the Goddess of material wealth. Besides conferring wealth, things of sensory enjoyments, and lordship the worship of Lakshmi also cleanses the devotee of his sins (*durita haranodyatani*). Lakshmi in *Kanakadharastava* is not only the consort of Vishnu, but the Power of the Absolute itself, manifesting also as Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning (*Girdevata*) and Parvati, the Goddess of Power (*Sasi-sekhara-vallabha*).

(Picture: Sri Padmavati of Tiruchanur)

Artist: 'Silpi'

LAKSHMI

(CONSORT OF VISHNU)

After his Upanayanam performed at a very early age, Sri Sankara rigorously followed the injunctions of the brahmacharya *life and lived on the food obtained by begging* (Biksha). *In the course of his daily begging rounds, he stood at the threshold of a poor Brahmin one day and asked for alms. The master of the house, who himself lived on the charity of his neighbours, was away and the lady of the house, who possessed a magnanimous heart, wanted to give something to this child with a divine countenance. Her search resulted in unearthing only a small* amalaka *fruit. This she deposited in the begging bowl devoutly, her heart melting at the thought that she had nothing better to offer. Sri Sankara divined the situation and realised that the small gift came from a heart as expansive as the sky itself. He then and there offered a prayer to Lakshmi the Goddess of Wealth. It consists of 18 verses which go by the name of* Sri Kanakadharastavam. *Sri Mahalakshmi responded to the prayer and showered golden* amalaka *fruits inside the house of the poor Brahmin couple and banished their poverty. Incidentally this was also the first composition of Sri Sankara.*

There is internal evidence in the stotra itself to substantiate this story. The verse providing this evidence is;

दद्याद्दयानुपवनो द्रविणांबुधारान्
अस्मिन्नकिञ्चनविहङ्गशिशौ निषण्णे ।
दुष्कर्मघर्ममपनीय चिराय दूरं
नारायण प्रणयिनी नयनांबुवाहः ॥

In this verse, Sri Sankara prays that impelled by the wind of kindness the cloud of Lakshmi's grace should shower the rain of wealth, driving away to a distance the scorching heat of the past sins of the suffering house holder. Sankara likens him to the fledgling chaataka, *which can quench its thirst only when rain falls. The utter helplessness of the poor householder is indicated by this comparison.*

If we too recite this Kanakadhaarastavam with devotion, we shall be relieved of poverty, sufferings, afflictions and sins.

H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI

THE GREAT MEDIATRIX

By

PROF. C. JAGANNATHACHARIAR

This article deals about the unparalleled eminence of Goddess Lakshmi. Sri Mahalakshmi, otherwise known as Periya Pirattiar is considered mainly as the Goddess of Wealth and a harbinger of all prosperity and auspiciousness (*mangalam*) for a family. This is no doubt the basis for the worship of that deity but there is an inner philosophical content which is the essence for the existence of Lakshmi Tatvam; this is to be found in the Pranavam "Om", especially in the "Akaram"* imbedded in that Mantra. She is the "Sarvaloka Janani" the origin of all the worlds; She is always taking Her permanent abode in Vishnu's chest-" Vishnu-Vakshassthalasthitham." She is all-pervasive (Visva Matha) though said to have taken her birth from the Celestial Ocean of Milk—'Ksheera Samudraraja Tanaya'. She is the Mother of all the Universe—*Mathus samastha Jagatham*—and is called "Trailokya Kutumbini". With Her Consort Vishnu She is controlling the entire Universe shedding lustre, grace, love and affection on all beings animate and inanimate. In the Guruparampara (heirarchy of preceptors) she is spoken of as immediately next to Narayana; still She is said to command equal dignity with the Lord, for the Guruparampara commences with the expression "Lakshminatha samarambham". Hence She is called Periya Pirattiar. Just as the Veda named the Lord Absolute as 'Sriyah-pati', Lakshmi is named as 'Vishnu-Patni'. Just as the avatars of Lord Narayana are legion, so also are the Avatars of Lakshmi. Whenever the Lord takes His avatar, Lakshmi also takes Her avatar simultaneously along with Him. (Cp.: Rama and Sita; Krishna and Rukmini.). Just as the Lord is called by various names, she is also called by various names as 'Sri, Bhagavati, Devi, Mata, Padma, Padmalaya, Jaladhitanaya, Kamala, Haripriya, Hari Vallabha, Indira, Tirumagalar, Cheyyal, Tamaraiyal, Pangayattal,' etc. These names carry a lot of significance and each is pregnant with celestial meaning. The Sahasranama Stotram of Lakshmi catalogues 1008 names describing the characteristics and divine qualities of this Divine Mother.

Adi Sankara says in his *Sri Kanakadhara Stotra*—"I pray to you to just see me with your eyes of grace, a little bit askew and that will do for me to get your flood of grace, O! Mother."†

Thus She is the bestower of all grace and blessings and any one who prays to Her with devotion and sincerity will be free from poverty, disease, pests and all kinds of miseries in his lifetime and later after

**Cp*: "When Lord Narayana protects a *chetana* (individual soul), the presence of the Devi is essential there and hence the letter 'Akaram' which represents Narayana includes also the Sri content in it, integrated and inseparable. The Lakshmi Tantram 28—14 says: 'Lakshmyaa Saha Hrishikeso Devyaa Karunyarupyaa; rakshakas sarvasiddhante Vedantepi cha geeyate.'"

†*Cp*: "Kamale! Kamalaksha Vallabhe! tvam Karunapoora tarangitair apangaih avalokaya mam" (Verse: 20).

Niryana (dea'h) will attain 'sayujyam' and will become a Nitya-suri (Eternal Resident in the Lord's Abode).

The other important aspect of the Lakshmi Tatvam is that She is the "Purushakara-bhoothai" playing a recommendatory role in compelling Her Spouse Vishnu to bestow grace on a *chetana* (individual), though he is 'doshabhuyishtha'—that is, full of sins and crimes. She acts as the Mediatrix and compels Him to forgive man's foibles and to entertain him into His Bliss of Grace by saying "Na kaschin naaparaadhyathi" and "Karyam karunam aryena"—that is to say, She will plead with Him as follows :

"After all, who is free from sins in this mundane world? You cannot find even a single soul free from faults; and hence to do a fault, whether knowingly or unknowingly in this *prakriti* (earthy earthly world) is quite common; 'to forgive is divine'; You are the Divinity and hence You must excuse their weaknesses and sins." She even goes to the extent of pleading that they have not at all done anything wrong, and "if all the *chetanas* were to desist from doing anything wrong, then, where is the place for exhibiting Your grace or the necessity for calling You as "Karuna Kakutstah", "Kripa Jalanidhe" etc.......then it becomes a misnomer."

The all-gracious Pillai Lokacharya opines that the benefit Lakshmi bestows on a *chetana* is this—" that unless she mediates and recommends clemency, even the Lord—, who is considered to be a *Nirankusa svatantra*, *i.e.*, one who acts on His own, and whom nothing external can impel into action —cannot do His stipulated work of Ishta-prapti (conferring desires) and Anishta-nivritti (destroying the opposite) (Sutra 119-*Mumukshuppadi*). The Mediational Function of pleading with the Lord on the one hand and comforting the souls on the other by this Mediatrix Lakshmi is metaphorically expressed by this Sage thus :— "She is like the Mother who cannot leave the cradle of the children on the one side and cannot leave the bed of Her Lord on the other side". (Sutra 42—*Mumukshuppadi*). She is thus permanently meant to propitiate for our sins by Her endless acts of self-oblation.

Nanjiyar once asked Parasara Bhattar the following question :—" For attaining salvation is it not enough to resort directly to the Universal Lord ; why should it be necessary to go to Him through the mediation of the Mother ?"* To which Bhattar quoted Nammalwar's Thiruvoimozhi lines† :

"Nalum Nam *Tiruvudai Adigal* tham
Nalam Kazhal Vanangi
Malum Or Idattilum Vanakkodu
malvadu valame"
(1—3—8)

that is to say—" daily we have to prostrate before the Feet of Lakshmi Narayana (that is the Lord with His Consort Lakshmi) and even when we are going to shuffle off this mortal coil, it is better to die with folded hands contemplating on Lakshmi Narayana". Further, he expatiated the significance of the Holy Formula "*Sriman Narayana*" by saying :—" Generally we find the mother affording protection to a child when it is found guilty, while the father is thereby irate; the mother knows exactly the opportune time when the father is in the proper mood to be pacified and made to forgive the child, and renew his natural affection for him. Similar is the case with God in protecting His Creatures. As Father, He is the Dispenser of Justice ; as Mother He is the Forgiver". In this connection it is befitting to quote the words of B. B. Nagarkar of the Brahma Samaj at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893. He said—"...... the world has yet to understand and realise as it never has in the past, the tender and loving relationship that exists between mankind and their Supreme Universal Divine Mother. O ! What a world of thought and feeling is centred in that one monosyllabic word "Ma" (mother)...... Words cannot describe, hearts cannot conceive of the tender and self-sacrificing love of a human mother. Of all human relations that of mother to her children is the most sacred and elevating relation and yet one frail and fickle human mother is nothing in comparison with the Divine Mother of the entire humanity, who is the primal source of all love, all mercy and all purity."

Added to this 'Purushakaram' Role, She plays the parts of being a "Prapyai" and "Kainkarya-varthakai", when the Lord acts as the "Prapya" that is, one to whom all should go and look for salvation. That is to say, She, *like Him*, accepts equally the Kain-

*There is also a theory that Goddess Lakshmi like Lord Narayana can Herself directly give salvation (Moksha).

†''நாளும் நம் திருவுடையடிகள் தம் நலங்கழல் வணங்கி மாளும் ஓரிடத்திலும் வணக்கொடு மாள்வது வலமே'' *(1-3-8).*

karya or service of the *chetana* done to Her Consort (the Lord), and also infuses the idea in the mind of the Lord that the Kainkarya rendered by the *chetana* should be accepted without reservation, by multiplying his sincerity ten thousandfold. This is the quintessence of the Lakshmi Tatvam and service to this "Mithunam" or "Divine Couple" is to be sought after by everyone, as the ultimate goal of his existence. Like Lakshmana, who had done service to the Divine Couple (Rama and Sita) at all levels—(' Aham Sarvam Karishyami Jagratas svapatascha te')—it is incumbent on everyone to do service to the Divine Lord and His Consort.

In fine, let me end this treatise with the text of the initial words of Sage Yamunacharya's Hymn to the Mother and Goddess of the Universe, which runs as follows :—

(*a*) Kantaste Purushottamah

(*b*) Phanipatih Sayyasanam

(*c*) Vahanam Vedatma Vihagesvaro

(*d*) Yavanika Maya Jagan Mohinee

(*e*) Brahmesadi Suravrajah sadayitah tvad dasa dasi ganah

(*f*) Sririty evacha nama te Bhagavati!
Brumah katham tvam vayam.

This verse has been translated into English by Sri Parthasarathi Yogi, one of the greatest savants of the last century and his translation will be a fitting conclusion for this article :—

(*a*) The Soul Supreme, 's Thy Lord Beloved !

(*b*) The Angel most wise, strong—Thy Couch and Chair !

(*c*) Thee, bears Ved-Essence Bird
Who Flies with wings of Light and Love !

(*d*) Thy veil is Wondrous Matter Gross—
Which all the Universe doth blind !

(*e*) Gods, set to make and end this world,
With all their peers and queens, serve Thee,
As male and female servants true !

(*f*) Thy very name is "Bliss" O Seat
Of ev'ry attribute benign !
How We are worthy, Thee to praise?

Let us bow down before her as Sri Sankaracharya does :

"*Namostu Devadibhirarchittayai*
Namostu Nandatmaja Vallabhayai"

NARASIMHA

(The Man-Lion Avatar of Vishnu)

The milky white ocean and white Adisesha bed provide the necessary relief or background to the scintillating dark-blue body of Narayana or Vishnu. The very act of His slumber is described as active vigil in the protection of all the worlds and their contents. It is this apparently dormant energy, which makes the entire universe function according to plan, that burst out into a dynamic force in the form of Narasimha, or Nrsimha when he came out of the pillar in all power and cleft the demon Hiranya's heart in a split-second.

Reading Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada's work is like conversing with him face to face. One such work is his Lakshmi Nrsimha Stotra, *in which occurs the following sloka :*

त्वत्प्रभुजीवप्रियमिच्छसि चेन्नरहरिपूजां कुरु सततं
प्रतिबिम्बालंकृतिधृतिकुशलो बिम्बालंकृतिमातनुते ।
चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथाभवमरुभूमौ विरसायां
भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥

We are just reflections of the Supreme Soul. If we want to adorn the reflection, we should adorn the Person reflected. Doing good to one's own self is like trying to adorn the reflection, forgetting the Person who throws the reflection. If we worship Nrsimha—who is the avatar of Vishnu with the lion's face—it is worship offered to the original, and so it does good to the entire humanity, which is Nrsimha's reflection alone—says Sri Sankara in the above stanza. Addressing the mind, which he likens to a bee, Sri Sankara says " O bee of mind! Why do you hover purposelessly over the arid waste of worldly life, while you have the lotus feet of Narasimha (with his consort Lakshmi) dripping the honey of compassion ?"

H. H. Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi

AN AVATAR OF GRACE ; NOT FURY

By

KANCHIPURAM PRATIVADI BHAYANKARAM ANNANGARACHARYA

Hiranyakasipu, Lord of the demons, undertook a fierce penance to propitiate Brahma, the God of Creation. Brahma appeared before him, and because of the intensity of his penance, had to grant him the boon he desired. Hiranyakasipu asked that he be endowed with the strength of the five elements put together. Brahma granted him that boon. Since no mortal can directly ask for the boon of immortality, Hiranyakasipu demanded of Brahma that many conditions should be fulfilled before anyone could kill him—he could be killed by neither man nor animal ; neither in the night nor in the day ; neither within the house nor outside ; neither by weapons nor by human physical strength ; neither on earth, nor in the skies, etc. etc. Because of the intense *tap s* of the Demon King, Brahma had to concede all this. Fortified with the boon, Hiranyakasipu became the unquestioned lord of not only this world of ours but also of the entire universe.

Puffed up with pride and arrogance, Hiranyakasipu deemed himself to be God, and laid it as a rule that everybody should offer worship to him alone, and not to any of the gods. He also deprived the *devas* of the offerings (*havirbhagas*) in sacrifices, and himself grabbed them all. Abusing and ridiculing Vishnu, the God of gods, became the most pleasant avocation of Hiranya. The whole universe was undergoing untold hardship under his reign of terror.

Strangest among strange, this demon had a boy, by name Prahlada, incomparable in wisdom, purity and piety. The boy was the repository of all good qualities. Hiranya directed the family preceptor to impart learning to Prahlada.

The preceptor took the boy to school and began teaching with the words : *Hiranyaya namah* (Obeisance to Hiranya). Prahlada shuddered on hearing these words and tightly closed his ears with his fingers. Then he said to the Guru : " Should you not begin with the eight-syllabled *mantra* of Sri Vishnu, which renders obeisance unto the Great Lord ? ". Prahlada began repeating the holy *mantra* of Vishnu, and tears trickled down his cheek and his body thrilled.

The Guru was afraid that disaster was in store for him. He reprimanded the boy to invoke his father first. Prahlada would not. The Guru went to Hiranya and reported that Prahlada disobeyed him even at the very start. The Guru was not bold enough to explicitly refer to the *ashtakshara* (eight-syllabled *mantra* of Vishnu).

Hiranya sent forth for his boy and asked him why he disobeyed the Guru. Prahlada replied that it was no disobedience to praise the *ashtakshari* which is more than a mere name of Vishnu. Prahlada waxed eloquent on the greatnes of Vishnu, His holy mantra, and devotion to Him.

Hiranyakasipu became irate. It was such an affront to him that while even the devas g ve him th place of God, his own son would not. He fulminated against Prahl .da :

" Naughty arrogant boy : You have no trace of self-respect in you. Vishnu is the

avowed enemy of our family and our race. It was He who killed my brother, Hiranyaksha, by taking the form of a wild boar. Wretched boy, if you continue this attitude you will face dire consequences. Beware and begone."

Prahlada only felt pity for his father. He tried his best to convince his father that there should be an Origin for all that we see and enjoy and that this Origin responds to our heart-felt call. But his pleadings were of no avail.

The most cruel punishments were meted out to Prahlada by his own father. Hiranyakasipu ordered to his attendants. "Kill this boy who shamelessly avers that he is the devotee of my vilest enemy, Vishnu".

The demoniac attendants thereupon threw all sorts of missiles on the boy, Prahlada. But the missiles did no harm to him. Their sharpness was blunted on touching his holy body. Prahlada was not at all conscious of the torture as he was delving in the joy of meditating upon the Lord.

Failing in their effort to kill Prahlada by weapons, they reported the wonder to Hiranya. Far from realising the greatness of Prahlada upon this, Hiranya felt humiliated and became all the more furious. "Vishnu is *mayavi* (creator of illusions). He has deluded you all. Don't lose heart. You should get over that illusory power by all means. Now let a great conflagration be prepared and the boy pushed into it."

Hiranya's order was carried out. Faggots were heaped to a hillock's proportion, pitcher after pitcher of combustible oils were poured in, and the whole was set fire to. Even the skies were licked by the red tongues of the conflagration.

Prahlada was consigned to those flames. He was not at all alive to the encircling fire, meditating as he was upon the holy Name which was cooler than the coolest in the world. In the shower of the Nama-japa, the fire was completely put out in no time.

On hearing this miracle, Hiranya felt more humiliated. "Let the *ashta-ma-nagas* (eight great serpents) bite Prahlada, all at once" was his callous order.

The terrific fangs of the eight great serpents plunged into the soft sweet body of the boy. What a wonder! The boy was not affected in the least. But the fangs pulverised into powder there and then. Converting their venom into nectar, Prahalda was repeating the nectarine Name.

Then Hiranya sent forth the celestial elephant, Airavata, to trample upon Prahlada and crush him to a pulp. Prahlada was bound with fetters all over and thrown in the way of Airavata, which was inebriated and infuriated. But the inbriation and fury were thoroughly wiped out as Airavata saw Prahlada. Within the heart of Prahlada, the elephant saw the Lord who in the past saved the King of Elephants, Gajendra when it was struggling for life, caught in the grip of a mighty crocodile.

The intoxicated elephant saluted Prahlada and went away. Hiranyakasipu's humilitation and frustration knew no bounds. Not only Prahlada, but the celestial elephant also had disobeyed him ! He could not stand this. He ordered his attendants to somehow tame the elephant and make it obedient. The attendants inflicted various tortures on the elephant and in the last, it had to yield. Airavata dashed its tusks on Prahlada, and the tusks broke off to pieces as if they were plantain stem.

Hiranya had yet another punishment to impose. He had his son bound to a stone and thrown into the rough seas. But as soon as Prahlada, muttering the name of Vishnu, Who reclines on the bed of serpent in the ocean of milk, entered into the seas it became tranquil, and the stone just floated on the waveless sheet of water. Was it not the same sea on which the Lord as a child floated on a banyan leaf in between the deluge and re-creation !

Then poison was given to Prahlada. Other tortures also followed. But Hiranya miserably failed.

All other external agencies having failed, Hiranya made up his mind to himself kill Prahlada. As he pounced upon Prahlada the boy said sweetly : "Even if I die, it will not be because of your power. You also derive your power from Narayana. No life is under your control. If I die, it is because Narayana would have it that way."

Hiranya burst forth : "You ignore and belittle my giant strength, though I stand visibly before you, and harp upon the greatness of one who is not at all visible. Let that invisible save you, if he can."

Prahlada, undaunted and unruffled replied : "The fragrance of the flower is not visible. The oil in the sesame seed is not visible. But for that Invisible, nothing visible in this universe could be what it is.

The so-called invisible is immanent everywhere, in the great mountains, in the seas, in this palace, in the pillar before you, in the inside of the atom, even in your words of derision."

Hiranya laughed and laughed in abject mockery. " Eh, Is he within this pillar before me ? If your are sure about it, and if you are also sure that your god comes to the rescue of his devotees, why don't you make him visible in this pillar ? If you could not, then your words are proved false and you should volunteer to die at my hands."

So the trial mounted up to the breaking point. Either Prahlada's devotion must be proved concretely, or else he should be killed by Hiranya.

Prahlada had no doubt whatsoever. The Lord will not let him down at that critical moment. So he replied boldly: "Oh King of Demons, The Lord will manifest Himself out of whichever place you touch. If He does not, then *you* need not take out my life ; I shall *myself* give up my life."

With a sarcastic smile on his face, Hiranya said : " Whichever place I touch ? Why touch ? Let me beat and kick this pillar, because, as you say, may sworn enemy is there within."

So saying Hiranyakasipu dealt a severe blow on the pillar nearby. The pillar split into two—not because of the blow, but because Narayana had manifested Himself out of it in the furious, yet gracious, form of a Lion-Man: Narasimha or Nrsimha. The whole universe was shaken to its core as Narasimha came out, laughing thunderously.

Narasimha stood out in all splendour, His manes encircling Him like the tongues of the flame of deluge. His toes went underneath the nether world and His head went up beyond the skies. His huge form could not be comprehended in entirety by anybody.

Anybody? No. The little boy Prahlada saw His saviour Narasimha in His full splendour.

Narasimha pounced upon Hiranya, placed him on His lap, and with His countless hands tightly clasped him. The vile Hiranya was blessed to have such an embrace. The sharp claws of the great Lion pierced into the heart of the demon, who was utterly powerless to resist the Lord. In no time, Hiranyakasipu was liberated—death becomes liberation, when it is the Lord who confers death.

Even the Devas were frightened at the sight of Narasimha. Lakshmi, the Divine Mother and Prahlada alone could approach Him. As Lakshmi Narasimha, He became the Lord of Grace and blessed Prahlada and all the worlds.

The great Lakshmi-Narasimha Himself ordered for the coronation of Prahlada. All the worlds rejoiced at Prahlada's coronation.

But the greater crown that the Lord Himself placed on Prahlada's head was unswerving devotion unto His feet.

So was Hiranyakasipu destroyed, exactly conforming to his stipulations to Brahma ; he was killed by neither man nor animal—he was killed by a man-cum-animal. He was killed neither in the skies, nor on the earth, for he was placed on the lap of the Lord. He was killed at the time of dusk which is neither day nor night. He was killed in the courtyard, which though it is not inside the house, cannot also be said as outside of the house ; he was not killed by human strength or by missiles ; it was the claws of the lion that tore his chest.

The important lesson imparted by Narasimha avatar is that the Lord did not kill Hiranya, because Hiranya was against Him. If this were so, the Lord would not have allowed Hiranya to enjoy overlordship for so many years. He incarnated as Narasimha only to save His devotee, and not to save His own supremacy.

The Lord, by a mere wish could destroy the mightiest demon, if destruction is the only aim. Here the Lord had the additional aim of bringing to light the great devotion of the boy, Prahlada. For that He imposed upon Himself an Avatar and an effort to kill the demon.

न स्मरत्यपकाराणां शतमपि आत्मवत्तया ।

The realised souls do not think of harming even those who have done them incalculable harm. The Lord says in the Gita :

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योस्ति न प्रियः ।

" I am equal to all. None I hate ; none I Love." If this same Lord appears as the terrible Lion-Man, it is not because of His hatred towards Hiranya. He assumed the fierce form only in order to pro tect the Bhakta, and Bhakti in general.

The Lord was tranquil, untouched, as long as Hiranya was blaspheming against Him. But when the Bhakta was in danger, when Bhakti was in danger, He could no longer be complacent and came out as Narasimha.

The protection given to Prahlada is more important than the destruction of the demon; भक्तस्य दानवशिशोः परिपालनाय- as Sri Vedanta Desika says.

Sri Sankaracharaya was a great devotee of Lakshmi Narasimha. It is said that he got his burnt hands afresh on extolling Narasimha by his *Lakshmi-Narasimha Karavalamba Stotra*. Sankaracharya's disciple Padmapada too was an ardent devotee of Narasimha, and when the Acharya was about to be felled down by the sword of a Kapalika, this Padmapada had an *avesa* (was possessed of the power) of Narasimha and tore the Kapalika to pieces.

The Saalagrama in the Puja of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham is said to be sacred to Narasimha, and is believed to have been given to the Acharya by Narasimha Himself.

RAMA

Lord Narayana made up His mind to remain as a man when He incarnated as Rama, in order to teach the world the importance of reverence or bhakti *towards father, mother, teacher and God. He so identified Himself with His human role that He behaved exactly like an ordinary mortal and when any one attributed to Him qualities of God, He reminded him that He was only a man-*Aatmaanam maanusham manye.

Sri Rama is the remover of all our afflictions and bestower of prosperity as indicated in the verse, aapadam apahartaaram daataaram sarva sampadaam.

Sri Rama, of all the heroes in our epics stands as the ideal of ethics, morality, polity, and all other elevating ideologies blended into one. The world has preferred Him to Ravana and even Parasurama, in spite of their Brahminhood and their Isvara Bhakti, because His self-control and humility outweighed all other high-sounding qualities, either in Himself or in His contemporaries.

*

वेद वेद्ये परे पुंसि
जाते दशरथात्मजे ।
वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत्
साक्षाद्रामायणात्मना ॥

When the Supreme Person Paramapurusha proclaimed by Veda, was born as Rama, the son of Dasaratha, Veda also made its appearance in the form of his story Ramayana, *composed by the son of Prachetas, i.e., Valmiki.*

The Vedas are the source of all dharmas. *Sri Rama was the upholder and embodiment of* dharma *as indicated in the verse* Ramo vigrahavan dharmah. *He protected* dharma *by his mental courage and disciplined life. Therefore, when he left for the forest for fourteen years to honour the pledge given by his father to Kaikeyi, his mother Kausalya offered him as a talisman, the very* dharma *which he protected so that, that* dharma *may in turn protect him from all harms.*

Dharma will protect us only when we take care of it. Sri Rama has become, therefore, a model for us all.

The Parama-purusha spoken of in the Vedas is the perfect and full embodiment of dharma, *and so is Sri Rama of the* Ramayana. *The* Ramayana *instructs us in karma(Action),Bhakti (Devotion) and Jnana (Knowledge) and in the* dharmic *way of life. If we keep before ourselves the ideal of Sri Rama, we will be able to tide over every difficulty and danger and will be saved from straying into evil path. Meditating and repeating the name of Rama (Sri Rama nama smarana) is the sure succour in life's tribulations.* Rama nama *is called* Taarakamantra, *because it carries one beyond the ocean of births and deaths. Anjaneya who practised the* japa *of* taaraka mantra *to perfection, is the embodiment of* brahmacharya (continence) *and valour, which are most needed to endow us with strength to successfully go through the voyage of life. If we are anchored in Sri Rama and His supreme devotee, Sri Anjaneya, our minds will not be sullied by lust and other passions, but will be disciplined to attain the Reality pointed out by the Vedas.*

—H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI

महारत्नपीठे शुभे कल्पमूले सुखासीनं आदित्यकोटिप्रकाशम् ।
सदा जानकीलक्ष्मणोपेतं एकं सदा रामचन्द्रं भजेऽहं भजेऽहम् ॥

I adore and adore Rama Chandra, who is the One Reality, Who is effulgent as the essence of myriads of suns, Who is seated in the easy posture on a gem-studded throne beneath the auspicious Wish-yielding tree — with His spouse Sita and brother Lakshmana ever at His side.

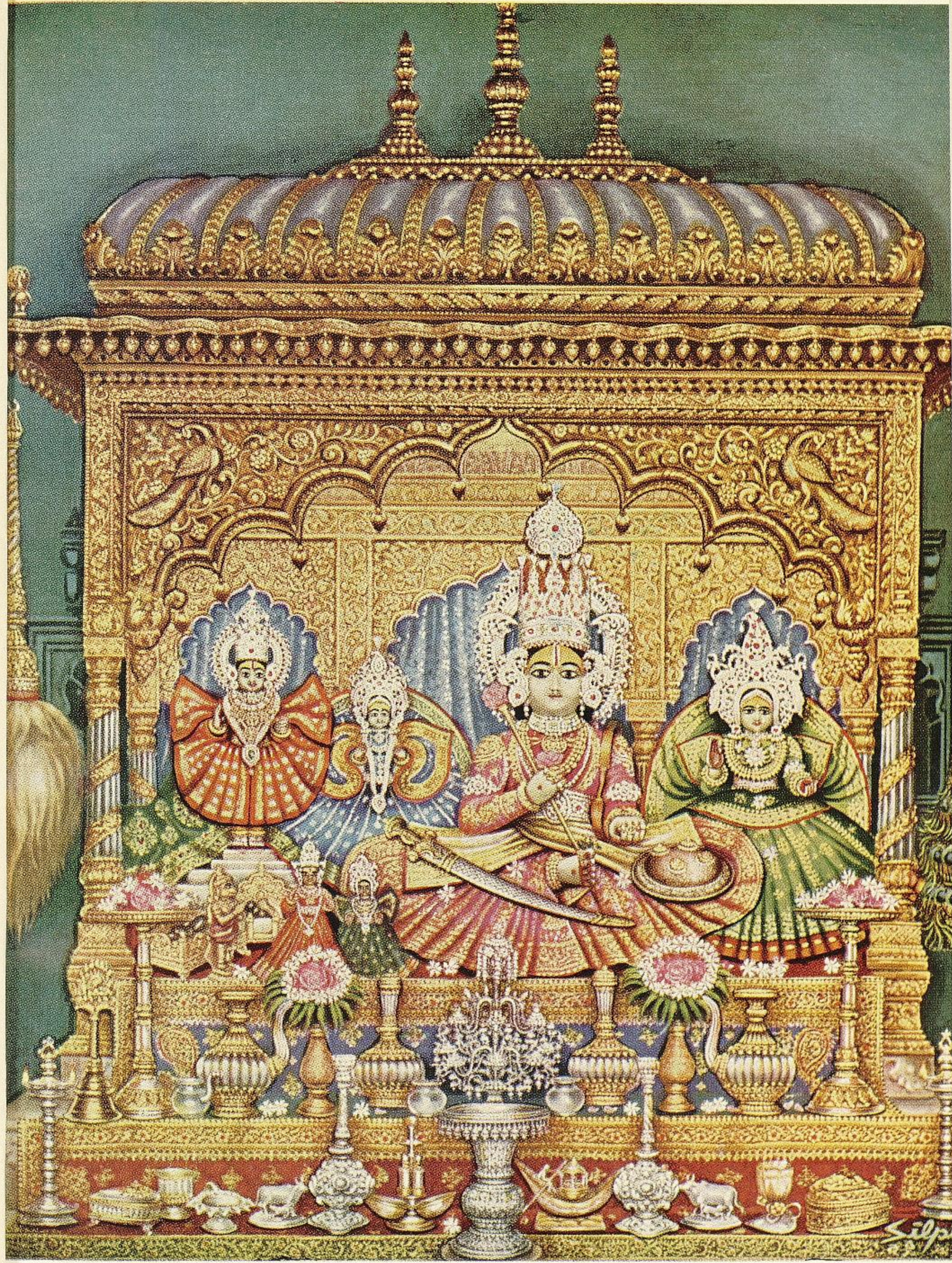
In *Rama Bhujangam,* in which the above stanza occurs, Sankara speaks of Rama — Who considered Himself to be just a mortal — in the Upanishadic terms describing the Attributeless Brahman. The hymn also stresses the efficacy of the Name of Rama, which is repeated by Siva Himself into the ears of those who die in Kasi.

Ramayana was to Sankara the story of the individual soul getting beyond the ocean of worldly delusion and conquering the demons of attraction and repulsion ; and Rama was to Sankara, a symbol of the *Brahmajnani,* the Realized Soul, who, regaining the Sita of Peace for spouse, is immersed in the Bliss of Self (Atmarama). As Sankara sings elsewhere :

Tirthva moharnavam hatva raga dveshadi rakshasan
Yogi Santhissamayaktah Atma-ramo Vijayate

(*Picture* : Rama-Sita-Lakshmana as enshrined in Ayodhya)

Artist : 'SILPI'



RAMA : THE EVER-CROWNED

By

K. CHANDRASEKHARAN

In the spectacular festival of science, the non-attachment of the human spirit is rarely applauded, if not totally ignored. Achievement and success lead the way to victory over desirelessness and restraint. The world is getting too much with us. It has little need to save it from itself. Everything, from cabbage to king, is forcibly drawn into the vortex of a spiralling progress. Man who is transcending all spatial limitations requires a timely warning of the need to transcend himself. Even a Mahatma's example of self-denial to light the path of his service to humanity has dimmed with the dust of sentimental worship of his followers.

The mark of true civilization has always been identified with the spirit of renunciation. But it has somehow lost its charms in the very land of its birth. Rajaji, therefore, remarked with pointedness, thus : "The desirelessness recommended in Indian Philosophy does not appeal to the modern mind which depends upon hope and faith in human effort. Religious dogma apart, detachment is recognised as a great and necessary virtue in all human endeavour. The philosophy of non-desire is intimately associated with detachment in work". Only those who are conscious of a purpose in life and are watchful of their acts from ever betraying any personal gain, can respond to the philosophy of non-attachment as a sustaining force in action. They easily fulfil the desideratum of the scriptural exhortation as well as the teachings of the sacred literature. We know that if the crown was denied to Rama, it was only to crown him eternally with the glory of his renunciation. His anxiety became transparent in rejecting the slightest advantage accruing to himself in any situation of an unusually storm-tossed career. From the period of his crossing the threshold of adolescence, he was found training himself to seek no single advantage of a legitimate claim of his or for being favoured by circumstance. He resisted any such thought even of gain to himself in his long march of striving, with no pause, for surpassing earlier records of his own adherence to Dharma in human relations.

The almost earliest episode which induces us to realise this trait in him belongs to the occasion of his eventful wedding of Sita. Breaking the ponderous bow of Siva before a world amazed at his prowess while so youthful, he showed what physical and mental concentration could achieve if properly disciplined. He became the legitimate winner of the fair Sita's hand. But strangely enough, he did not snatch the opportunity at once of becoming the proud possessor of the finest damsel in the world. He refused to be joined in wedlock to Sita without ascertaining the wishes of his father. The incident gets narrated in the Ramayana later in the forest by Sita in answer to Anasuya's question regarding her antecedents and marriage. She then recollected how her father Janaka had stood bewildered when the offer

of her hand was not forthwith accepted by Rama on the pretext of his not having had the approval of the marriage from his father.

दीयमानं न तु तदा प्रतिजग्राह राघवः ।
अविज्ञाय पितुच्छन्दमयोध्याधिपतेः प्रभोः ॥

(Raghava remained unwilling to accept me who was offered in marriage to him, because he was averse to do it without the permission of his father and Lord of Ayodhya. *Ayodhya Kanda* : 118, 51)

It is evident that despite his youth and the natural inclinations of a winner of such a prize as Sita, he evinced an unusual restraint and non-desirelessness. Janaka, himself known for a life of utter detachment, should have been paralyzed with amazement at Rama's unshakeable confidence in what he felt was his Dharma of detachment and duty.

The next occasion, upon a close study of Rama's character, would reveal to us the development of a sense of serene detachment in the celebrated scene where Kaikeyi informed him of his father's command to go to the forest, leaving Bharata to be crowned in his stead. His declaration then with a full mouth of his ideals in life such as नाहं अर्थपरो देवी (I am not attached to the material things of the world) or विद्धि मामृषिभिस्तुल्यं (Know me to be an equal of self-controlled ascetics) prove of what stern mettle he was made. Normally any person other than Rama would have prevaricated when it was to his disadvantage to receive the orders from the mouth of Kaikeyi instead of directly from the King. Rama spurned any such excuse for delaying his departure to the forest. He was further in advance even of Kaikeyi in thinking of how Bharata could be brought back from his uncle's home with expedition. So he said :

गच्छन्तु चैवानयितुं दूताः शीघ्रजवैर्हयैः ।
भरतं मातुलकुलादद्यैव नृपशासनात् ॥

(Let messengers speed forth on their fastest steeds to bring back Bharata at once from his uncle's house in order to be crowned soon. *Ayodhya Kanda*: 19, 10).

Rama thereby tried of his own accord to deprive himself of any future chances for reconsideration of the fateful decision of Kaikeyi. She, on the other hand, should have received a fresh stimulus for quicker implementation of her own plans of self-aggrandisement. The contrast of the two natures apart in that tense situation, nothing could be more striking to an onlooker at Rama as strange than his abstaining from personal profit of any kind—even recognising the breath-taking admiration from people around who were watching his unaffected acceptance of the cruel sentence of exile.

We move then to the Chitrakuta hill where Rama with Sita and Lakshmana began to live a peaceful life, enraptured with the natural phenomena around. He was earning the reputation of a गिरिवनप्रियः (lover of the forest and hill). It was while he was gradually getting to forget the comforts of the city and beginning to acclimatise himself to the severities of the forest,that he had to make up his mind to leave such a restful existence in o der to move into the deeper woods of Dandaka. The visit of Bharata with the queen-mothers and courtiers of Ayodhya at Chitrakuta forced him to suspect the likelihood of further similar attempts to meet him, thereby rendering a grave source of disturbance to the meditations of the sages and a cause of fright to the beasts of the forest roaming at their will.

इह च मे भरतो दृष्टो मातरश्च स नागराः ।
सा च मे स्मृतिरन्वेति तान्नित्यमनुशोचतः ॥
स्कन्धावारनिवेशेन तेन तस्य महात्मनः ।
हयहस्ति करीषैश्च उपमर्दः कृतो भृशम् ॥
तस्मादन्यत्र गच्छाम इति सञ्चिन्त्य राघवः ।
प्रातिष्ठत स वैदेह्या लक्ष्मणेन च सङ्गतः ॥

(It was here Bharata was seen by me along with the queen mothers. That recollection would frequently disturb me also. Further by the entry of the army of Bharata into the forest, the entire place had been trampled upon and left unclean by the droppings of elephants and horses of his retinue. 'So I shall move from here to another place', thus thought Raghava, and thereafterwards started out with Sita and Lakshmana. *Ayodhya Kanda*: 117, 2—4).

Next we find Rama, after the abduction of Sita by Ravana, in a very disconsolate mood, and seeking the help of Sugriva for recovering his lost wife. Pledging himself to an agreement with Sugriva on a condition that he should kill Vali before the other should arrange for the quest of Sita, Rama acted with celerity in disposing of Vali with no compunction. Sugriva having had his coronation and the security of love with his consorts, remained forgetful of his obligations towards Rama. Rama could have shown his eager-

ness for the proposed search of Sita commencing at once ; but he did not consider his own strait as more demanding of immediate satisfaction than the needed rest and enjoyment which Sugriva, after the hard days of his own banishment from Kishkinda, required. So he comforted himself with the thought :

स्वयमेव हि विश्रम्य ज्ञात्वा कालमुपागतम् ।
उपकारं च सुग्रीवो वेत्स्यते नात्र संशयः ॥
तस्मात् कालप्रतीक्षोऽहं स्थितोऽस्मि शुभलक्षण ।
सुग्रीवस्य नदीनां च प्रसादमनुपालयन् ॥

(Let Sugriva rest by himself and on his own initiative choose the time for action. He is not likely to forget the succour given to him. So I'll wait for the time till both the waters of the rivers and Sugriva's mind settle down in calmness. *Kishkinda Kanda*: 28, 62-63).

Had it not been for Rama, any other person would have betrayed impatience and soreness of heart at the way Sugriva wanted to take time for starting on his venture. A distinct advantage, no doubt, Rama had over Sugriva in securing him not only freedom from fear of Vali but also his lost queen Ruma, each of which would be sufficient to justify him in any demand for action forthwith. But he desisted from any such attempt at satisfaction of his own need. It was supremely Rama's way of never even availing himself of a chance for an advantage due to him.

Perhaps, no other act of sacrifice of Rama could have crowned him with greater distinction than his decision to abandon Sita to the fire or the forest ; his acute sensitiveness of soul to the unmerited ill-reputation that might engulf him, counselled him to take the step lest he might be guilty of ignoring any the slightest whisper of his selfishness in accepting Sita as her old pure self. No doubt a modern outlook may seek to judge Rama as caring for his own reputation at the expense of another's. But a little more of reflection would counsel the impulsive mind from drawing any rash conclusion before calmly viewing Rama's never-failing trait of aversion to snatch an advantage to himself in direct opposition to what others would imagine of him or his haste in a situation like that. Even the statement of his आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये (I cannot think of myself otherwise than an ordinary mortal) can lend itself to the interpretation of a forthright assertion of his to deny any divine knowledge in himself for overcoming the charge of selfishness in reclaiming Sita with no qualms. It was a trying moment, no doubt, for him. It was because of his capacity for a supreme act of self-denial that this victory over the self gained for him for long a glory by far greater than what he had achieved against the ten-headed Ravana on the battle field.

Valmiki sensed this evidently, when he revolved within himself whether Rama rose much superior to everbody else within his own knowledge, by performing what has staggered the world. By giving up Sita in whom he had garnered up all that he had cherished most in life, he gave up a part of himself. The sage in Valmiki counselled him not to surrender to the momentary indignation of his at Rama's act, but wait for a better understanding which again and again tried to crop up for clarification in his deeper soul. He was constantly questioning within himself whether Rama possessed, unlike anybody else, the qualities in abundance to be immortalized in poem and song which would last till eternity. Being a disciplined soul himself, he was aware of the demands upon one's fortitude and forbearance whenever conflicts of the kind, as assailed Rama, oppressed the mind, for a solution. Because in that test Rama came out unscathed, that the poet preserved him in poetry and portrayed him as a *Purushottama.*

SRI KRISHNA

(The Perfect Avatar)

Light is most welcome in utter darkness, Krishna is that great light born in darkness, both physical and spiritual.

What is a year to us is a day for the Devas. The six months of our dakshinayana *is a single night for them. What is a month to us is a day for our departed forefathers in the Pitr-loka. So the dark half of our lunar month* (Krishna Paksha) *is their night ; and in it, our ashtami* (8*th day*) *is their midnight. So, Krishna, born in the midnight of* Dakshinayana-Krishnapaksha-ashtami *is one born in the deepest darkness according to the calendar of human beings, Pitrs and Devas.*

Not only the time, but the place where He was born was also plunged in darkness. It was the prison-cell.

Add to all this He was Himself dark-complexioned.

Like the rain and lightning born of dark waterladen clouds, Krishna gave out the rain of Grace and the lightning of Enlightenment. The light of the Bhagavat Gita *given by Krishna will be shedding its radiance as a lamp* within, *for all those who seek the way out of this dark, worldly life of ours.*

Bhagavata *which describes the sports of Krishna is extolled as the Scripture of scriptures. It opens out the inner eye of the devotee. The endearing Tamil name of Krishna,* Kannan, *signifies that He is that Eye which sees all, and yet stands apart.*

Krishna's beautiful form is a feast for the eye. His Gita *is a feast for the ear. Through the eye and ear He seeps into the soul and drenches it with joy.*

The great dynamism of this Perfect Avatar, His numerous exploits, His great renunciation are all enveloped in His utter playfulness. He bears all the brunt with the cheer of a playboy, ever playing dulcet notes on His flute. We should also cultivate that equipoise, detachment, and light-mindedness even though ever engaged in activities for the welfare of the world.

He fascinates the entire cross-section of humanity—as the mischievous urchin of Gokula ; as the cowherd of Brindavan ; as the divine artist playing on the flute; as the beloved of the cowherdesses ; as the wrestler who did short work of Chanura ; as the wise adviser of King Ugrasena ; as the emissary of the Pandavas showing consummate statesmanship; as the strategist devising plans in the war—He who was all this soothes us most by saving Draupadi from dishonour, by conferring riches on the indigent Kuchela, and by conferring the highest wisdom on Arjuna, and the very fruit of that wisdom, Liberation (Mukti) on Bhishma.

All His life He was utterly impersonal. Even when He had to shed the mortal coil as the arrow of an inadvertant hunter shot Him, He did not lose His self-composure and had nothing but love for the hunter.

He who stole butter and milk in his boyhood continues to steal the hearts of people by his Grace. Both Man of ceaseless Action and Man of Supreme Knowledge Krishna is rightly worshipped as the Perfect Incarnation of Vishnu.

—H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI.

सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं नित्यमनाकाशं परमाकाशं
गोष्ठप्राङ्गणरिङ्गणलोलमनायासं परमायासम् ।
मायाकल्पितनानाकारमनाकारं भुवनाकारं
क्ष्मामानाथमनाथं प्रणमत गोविन्दं परमानन्दम् ॥

Gopala — He Who incarnated as Krishna, a cow-herd protecting the cows — is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity, Eternity, Space, that beyond Space. He, the facile play-boy in the cow-pen, is also the numerous other forms in which He is thought of, and the cosmos itself is nothing but His form. I worship Him, the Lord of Bhudevi and Sridevi, beyond Whom is no over-lord, my Govinda Who is Supreme Bliss.

Here, in *Govindashtaka*, as in his much longer *Prabodha Sudhakara* Sankara the poet-devotee revels in the juxtaposition of the just-opposed ; the Supreme Brahman sporting as the mischievous yet, merciful urchin of Gokula.

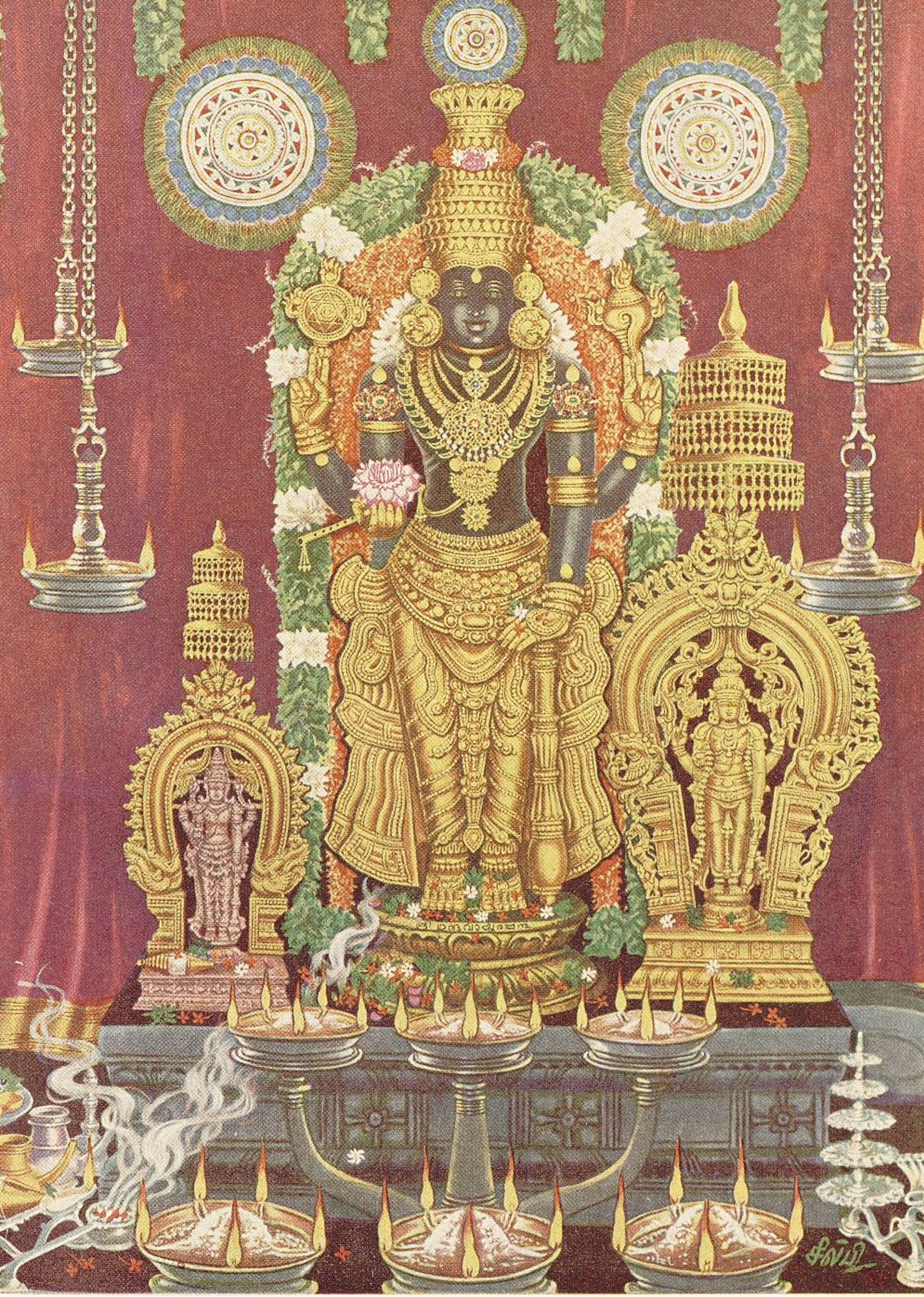
Krishna is believed to be the hereditary deity (*Kula Devata*) of Sankara, and to this day we have a Krishna temple in his birth-place Kaladi, which is said to be associated with his life in many ways.

Sankara is said to have prescribed the code of worship in the famous Krishna temple in Kerala, Guruvayur.

Among the many names of Krishna, Sankara was particularly fond of 'Govinda' — as when he raised his clarion call to the deluded soul to take to Govinda's love (Bhaja Govindam). Sankara's Guru was Govinda Bhagavatpada, and therefore Krishna, the Jagadguru (World-Teacher) appears as the Guru of Sankara, who is our Jagadguru.

(*Picture* : Krishna of Guruvayur)

Artist : 'SILPI'



THE SAVIOUR OF HUMANITY

By

SMT. PREMA PANDURANGAN

Sri Krishna, the adored manifestation and the most splendid incarnation of Lord Narayana stands out without a peer and has taken the pride of place in the hearts of millions of Hindus. In point of popularity, He is second to none. He is universally acclaimed as the Saviour of humanity. From the village maidens who sing of His glory and describe Him as thrice-blest—

श्रवणमङ्गलम् , ध्यानमङ्गलम् , विश्वमङ्गलम् ।

(the One whom it is auspicious to hear about; auspicious to meditate upon ; the One who is the cause of auspiciousnsss in the universe) to the pontifical heads and the Paramahamsas — all alike adore Him as the great Teacher.

Krishna is Lord Himself कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् । Research scholars have been busy in unravelling the Krishna mystery. Barth in his book on *Religions of India* held the view that Krishna was the popular solar deity. Hopkins in his study declares that Krishna was the family patron God of the Pandavas. And Prof. Keith opines that Krishna was a deity of vegetation. Another set of scholars have challenged the view and affirmed the historicity of Lord Krishna. Dr. Ray Choudhury and W. D. Hill infer the historicity of Krishna on the evidence of a passage in *Chandogya* (III, 17, 6).

It is idle to discuss the historicity of Krishna. Valuable as these research findings are, they only tend to increase our learning but are of very little help to foster our devotion and faith. For the devotee, He is more real than his own flesh and blood.

Lord Krishna figures as the hero in the immortal Bhagavata, particularly in the Tenth Book which is very nearly half the *Harivamsa.* He is dynamic in the saga of the Kauravas and the Pandavas not only as the emissary of the latter, but also as the charioteer of Arjuna in the momentous battle. The Pandavas are His soul.

मम प्राणा हि पाण्डवाः ।

His exploits are described in the *Harivamsa*, the appendix to the *Mahabharata.* In classical Sanskrit literature, He figures as a prominent theme. To mention a few works that revolve round His resplendent personality: Lilasuka's *Krishnakarnamrta*, Vedanta Desika's *Yadavabhyudaya*, Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* and Narayanatirtha's *Krishnalilatarangini.*

The Lord, out of His infinite compassion for mankind descends to live amidst ailing and ignorant humanity, to impart light to it in its hour of darkness and gloom. Such descents are the avatars of the Lord. The purpose of the incarnation is not merely the destruction of the wicked and the protection of the good, but to show the path of righteousness.

The Lord was born, nay, disclosed Himself in the Cimmerian darkness as the eighth child of Vasudeva and the praiseworthy

Devaki, in all His transcendent loveliness, with gleaming jewellery :

तमद्भुतं बालकमम्बुजेक्षणं
चतुर्भुजं शङ्खगदायुदायुधम् ।
श्रीवत्सलक्ष्मं गलशोभि कौस्तुभं
पीताम्बरं सान्द्रपयोदसौभगम् ॥
महार्हवैदूर्यकिरीटकुण्डल-
त्विषा परिष्वक्तसहस्रकुन्तलम् ।
उद्दामकाञ्च्यङ्गदकङ्कणादिभिः
विरोचमानं वसुदेव ऐक्षत ॥

From His very birth till His Parinirvana, it is one long breath-taking mystery. Who is he that is not regaled when he listens to Krishna's pranks and the miracles He works to the astonishment of His foster mother Yasoda? Krishna *lila* (sport) is one vast enchanting poem endearing all to Him, disclosing the Lord's beauty, compassion, creativity, powers of destruction, prowess, intelligence—all the *sadgunas* (good attributes).

Either we listen to the *Bhagavata* expounded or read it for understanding the glory of Sri Krishna. It is impossible to recapture in bald summary the activities of Krishna either at Brindavan, Mathura or Dwaraka.

Sri Krishna has revealed Himself to erring mankind in manifold ways. He is essentially the Saviour, the Refuge and the Friend of all. He has proclaimed the royal path to liberation, open to one and all—the path of surrender and devotion, in His gospel to Arjuna, the 'chosen instrument, the close companion and the representative man.' The key-concept of Bhagavat-Gita which is the direct message of the Lord is unconditional, conscious, willing surrender of the total self to the Lord. This can be done by all. He who does it, is called a *bhakta*, devotee. Sri Krishna, in His dealing with men and women has laid bare the transparent glory of the *bhakti marga*. Prahlada, the child devotee, the darling of Narasimha, spoke of the nine forms of devotion and the devotees of Krishna illustrate them in their lives. Krishna was loved as a friend in a strict selfless mood, even in the hour of chill penury by Sudāma. Arjuna considered the Lord with an air of familiarity, as his equal and companion, till the hour of the *Viśvarupa* (when He revealed His cosmic Form).

Of all the *bhaktas*, the gopis (the simple cowherdesses) of Brindāvan stand out as the marmoreal examples of devotion. We have it on the evidence of Uddhava—

> "May I be born an humble shrub in some neglected corner at Brindavan, which is blessed with the dust from the feet of the gopis. They are the persons who by relinquishing the unshakeable path of social and moral life have adopted the path of Krishna that is persistently sought by hermits."

Swami Vivekananda describes the gopis as the greatest devotees of the Lord. He records that their love of Krishna marks a great land mark in the history of religion. "Here is the ideal of love for love's sake, work for work's sake, duty for duty's sake." [*Selections from Swami Vivekananda*, p. 302-303].

The Lord received each in his own measure and stepped to meet him on his own level. Two qualities in general characterise the Lord—His greatness and His accessibility, महत्त्व and सौलभ्य. His greatness would be of little avail to us but for His easy accessibility. The independent Lord allows Himself to be bound by the love of the *bhakta*. He is willing to do anything for His devotee, when He hears the shrill cry of anguish and call for succour. The chief illustrations are the memorable cry of the elephant-chief, the desolate cry of disconsolate Droupadi, the call to affirm his faith by Prahalada and others. *Krishna bhakti* is the panacea and the glory of the Kaliyuga.

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF VAISHNAVAM

By

DR. R. CHAMPAKALAKSHMI

Vaishnavam or Vaishnavism evolved as a result of the mingling of three streams of Indian thought. Its origin may be traced back to the post-Mauryan times, when the cult of the Vedic sacrifices suffered a general decline due to the popularity of the 'heterdox' sects of Buddhism and Jainism. It was a period when idolatrous cults based on devotion, like the Vasudeva-Krishna cult, were gaining importance. The most important step towards the evolution of Vaishnavism was taken when the *Brahmanas* attempted to appropriate the popular cults and re-orient them with a view to maintaining the social order established by the Vedic culture. The identification of Vasudeva-Krishna with the Vedic Vishnu was the result of this attempt. A further step was taken when Krishna-Vishnu came to be identified with a deified sage named Narayana associated with the *Pancharatra-Sastra* in the *Brahmana* literature. Thus the worshippers of Vedic Vishnu, the followers of the sage Narayana—the Pancharatrikas—and the worshippers of Bhagavat Vasudeva—the Bhagavatas—mingled together to form the Vaishnava sect. The term *Vaishnava dharma* was applied to the creed evidently because of the fact that the Brahmanic attempt at reorientation centered round the Vedic Vishnu.

As a religious sect Vaishnavism progressed rapidly in the centuries immediately before and after the Christian era. The popular cults of Vasdeva-Krishna and Sesha-Sankarshana were greatly responsible for the spread of the religion. Sankarshana was an agricultural deity and Krishna, a pastoral God, *par excellence*. Their worship was established in the region of Mathura among the Satvata-Vrshnis long before the Christian era. The famous grammarian Panini of the 6th century B.C. seems to refer to Vasudeva worship, and Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador of the 3rd century B.C., certainly mentions the Bhagavatas. In the 3rd-2nd centuries B.C., the Bhagavata faith was prominent in the region of Mathura and the neighbouring land towards the north-west. It soon spread to western India and northern Deccan probably with the migration of numerous Yadava tribes.

Besides Vasudeva-Krishna and Sankarshana, there were three other Vrshni heroes who were also deified and worshipped along with the first two as the Pancha-Viras. They were Pradyumna, son of Krishna by Rukmini, Aniruddha, son of Pradyumna, and Samba, another son of Krishna by Jambavati. However, Samba later came to be associated with the initiation of the Saura cult and fell out with the Bhagavatas. The other four Vrshni heroes were accepted as the Vyuha forms of Vasudeva-Krishna when the doctrine of the four Vyuhas, one of the foremost tenets of the Bhagavata religion, was evolved.

Another popular divinity, who was assigned a chief role in the Vaishnava religion, *viz*. the role of Vishnu's consort, was Sri or Lakshmi, the fertility Goddess. The various identifications mentioned above find concrete expression in the "Narayaniya" section of the

Mahabharata, and the *Harivamsa Purana* appended to it.

The spread of the Bhagavata religion to western and central India in the 2nd-1st centuries B.C. is attested by several inscriptions referring to the temples of the Vrshni heroes and to the followers of the Bhagavata faith among whom foreigners like Heliodorus the Greek ambassador, deserve special mention. The records of the Satavahanas in north-western Deccan indicate the prevalence of Vasudeva worship in that part of the country as early as the 2nd-1st centuries B.C.

Further south the spread of Bhagavatism or Vaishnavism in the Andhra and Tamil countries in the early centuries of the Christian era is revealed by the inscriptions of the Ganjam district in the Andhra country and by the numerous references found in the Tamil Sangam works to Narayana-Vishnu, Vasudeva-Krishna, Sankarshana, the *Vyuha* forms and the *avatars* of Vishnu. The identification of the pastoral deity Krishna with Mayon, the bucolic God of the Mullai region was the chief factor, which contributed to the rapid progress of the faith in the Tamil country. Furthermore, southern Madurai seems to have been associated with the spread of Bhagavatism as early as the 3rd century B.C., for Megasthenes refers to it as the centre of the worship of Heracles —the Greek's name for Krishna.

It is in the *Bhagavat Gita* that we come across the earliest and best exposition of the doctrine of the Bhagavata sect. It extols the virtue of Karma Yoga through which alone human salvation is believed to be possible. It is the same work which lays the foundations of the *avatara* theory, the germs of which can be traced back even to the Vedic times. The *avatara* concept seems to be related to the theory of cosmic evolution and is set forth in the idea of the birth of God among men again and again for the triumph of the good over evil.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

Vaishnavism became a well-established faith by the time of the imperial Guptas who ruled from the 4th to the 6th centuries A.D. The rulers of this dynasty such as Chandra Gupta II were devout followers of the Bhagavata faith and assumed significant titles like *Parama-Bhagavata*. Their patronage added to the growing importance of the new religious creed. All over India epigraphic records and literary works mark the progress of the faith between the 4th and 8th centuries A.D.—under the imperial Guptas in the north, the Chalukyas of Badami in the Deccan and the Pallavas of Kanchi in the extreme south of the peninsula.

The *avatara* concept, which has its germs even in the Vedic and Brahmanic literature, is fully evolved during this period and the traditional ten incarnations came to be established practically throughout the country. The Buddha, who is included in the traditional list of *avataras* in north India, has no place in the list of *avataras* in the South, particularly in the Tamil country as revealed by the hymns of the Vaishnava Alvars *.

Vishnu appropriated to himself the Matsya, Kurma and Varaha avataras, which were originally attributed to Prajapati Brahman in Brahmanic literature. The Narasimha and Vamana incarnations are associated with Vishnu from very early times. The other five *avataras, viz*, Parasurama, Rama, Balarama, Krishna (or Buddha) and Kalkin, came to be added during this period, the first two being legendary figures, but associated with the historical event of the organisation of the south, while Balarama and Krishna are historical figures, whose worship was the most important feature of early Bhagavatism. Kalkin, the last of the ten *avataras*, is an imaginary one assigned to the future and to the end of the Kali Yuga.

With the evolution of the *avatara* concept and the inclusion of several deities into the Vaishnava pantheon, a rich iconography also developed during the period from the 4th to the 8th centuries A.D.—usually called the classical period in Indian history. Henceforth sculptural representations of God Vishnu took varied forms. Vishnu in the three traditional postures—*sthanaka* (standing), *asana* (seated) and *sayana* (reclining)—became the most common form of representation. Of the three ,the *sayana* form seems to be a special feature of the South Indian temples. The *Vyuha* forms of Vishnu were popular in the north in the early centuries.

* The only exception is a Sanskrit inscription of the Pallava period mentioning the ten incarnations, of which Buddha is the ninth and takes the place of Krishna. This inscription evidently follows the northern tradition,

However, later iconographic development combined the four forms into a single icon (Vaikuntha and Visvarupa), which became common in Kashmir, Nepal and other region of the north.

The *avatara* forms of Vishnu came to occupy the most prominent place among the sculptural representations of the God. The *puranic* themes relating to the various *avataras* are found illustrated in several regions *e.g.* the famous Varaha panel in Udayagiri of the 5th century A.D. (Gupta), the sculptures of the Badami cave temple representing the Varaha, Vamana-Trivikrama and Narasimha incarnations and the well-known Mamallapuram sculptures depicting the Varaha and Vamana *avataras*. Dasarathi Rama does not appear in early sculptures, though he is definitely admitted into the *avatara* fold from the very beginning. It is only when an independent cult for the worship of Rama was established about the end of the 9th century or the beginning of the 10th century A.D. that sculptures of Rama together with Sita, Lakshmana and their devotee, Hanuman became common throughout India, particularly in the Tamil country.

The narrative panels depicting the themes mentioned above belonging to the period between the 4th and 8th centuries A.D. are of great iconographic interest. They are based on the mythological stories relating to the various *avataras* and hence contain all the important narrative details. Later, however, the narrative details were relegated to a secondary position and a gradual shifting of emphasis from the narrative to the iconic method of representation can be discerned in the history of Vaishnava iconography.

To the progress of Vaishnavism during this period the Bhakti movement of the south (6th to 9th centuries A.D.) contributed in no small measure. The southern movement appears to have been influenced by the northern example, *viz.* the Bhakti cult associated with Vasudeva-Krishna, which originated in the Mathura region. The link between these two movements is lost in the hazy events which followed the Sangam period in the Tamil country. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Tamil country witnessed the advent and spread of various cults including the Bhagavata creed. The 'heterodox' sects of Buddhism and Jainism had also found their way into the region and centuries of peaceful co-existence among the various sects followed. However, the appearance of a tribe called the Kalabhras upset the existing order and period of darkness ensued. It is probable that the so-called heterodox sects of Buddhism and Jainism had gained predominance over the other faiths during this period. But soon the exponents of the Bhakti movement, the Vaishnava Alvars and the Saiva Nayanmars brought about the decline of the Jain and Buddhist sects. They established the superiority of the Vaishnava and Saiva faiths mainly through their advocacy of *bhakti*, a fervid emotional surrender of the self or devotion to a personal God. The Alvars sang the praise of Vishnu and his various incarnations and extolled the importance of the *Archavatara*. The popular hymns that they have left to posterity is a precious heritage* marked by high literary quality and at times by great philosophical insight. The spiritual exaltation experienced by them as they stood worshipping at the various shrines of Vishnu is reflected throughout their hymns. While by virtue of their philosophical content these hymns satisfied the intellectuals, they also intensely appealed to the masses on account of the emotional outpourings contained in them. "It was indeed the Golden Age of Hindu revival in South India." The shrines visited by these saints and celebrated by them in their hymns became particularly sacred and kings and commoners alike regarded them as worthy of special attention.

Among the Alvars , who represented the Vaishnava wing of the Bhakti movement is counted a lady saint called Andal or Sudikkodutta-nachchiyar. The deification of the Alvars and Andal is an important feature of Vaishnavism in this region and influenced the Vaishnava iconographic development to a great extent. Images of all the Alvars (and later, of the Acharyas who came after them) came to be set up in all the Vishnu temples and worship offered to them on special occasions. Andal, in particular, acquired the honoured position of Vishnu's consort and came to be accepted as an incarnation of Bhudevi.

Vaishnavism was thus one of the two most powerful forces of the religious revival of the 7th century A.D. in the South. Temples came to be erected all over the region for

* The "Nalayiradivyaprabandha" collected by the famous Vaishnava teacher, Nathamuni (10th century A.D.).

Vishnu, Siva and other deities and played a pivotal role in the social and religious life of the people. Having stressed the importance of the *archavatara* of Vishnu, the Alvars paved the way for the exaltation of image worship. The temple became not only the centre of social life but also a rich storehouse of Vaishnava iconography.

Sectarian harmony generally prevailed among the various Hindu sects till about the 11th century A.D. The Pallava and Pandya rulers of the South, under whom the exponents of the Bhakti movement flourished, counted among themselves a number of Vaishnavas. The contemporary Chalukya rulers of Badami (Deccan) were favourably inclined towards the Vaishnava creed.

The general situation altered with the emergence of the Cholas as the imperial power of the Tamil country in the middle of the 9th Century A.D. Rulers of this dynasty after the time of Rajaraja I (985-1014 A.D.). had no significant Vaishnava leanings. In fact, the Chola period prepresents the most glorious epoch of Saivism in the South. The successors of Rajaraja showed a marked preference for Saivism at the expense of other creeds. Tradition avers that Ramanuja, the greatest of the Vaishnava teachers of the South, was persecuted at the instance of a Chola ruler (Kulottunga I ?) and was forced to leave the country and take shelter in Mysore, where he brought about the conversion of the Hoysala ruler *Bittiga* (Vishnuvardhana) from Jainism to Vaishnavism, thus establishing a landmark in the history of the faith in the Mysore region, where a strong centre of Vaishnava learning was organised by him at Melkote.

Ramanuja, the founder of Sri Vaishnavism flourished about 1100 A.D. His school of Vedantic philosophy was the most notable after that of Sankara. His doctrine called the Visishtadvaita (interpreted as modified monism or qualified non-duality) was already developed by Nathamuni and his grandson Yamunacharya, whom Ramanuja succeeded as pontiff of the Vaishnava sect.

Ramanuja's contribution to philosophy is represented by the three works, the *Vedanta Sangraha*, the *Bhashya* or commentary on the *Bhagavat Gita*, and the celebrated *Sri Bashya* on the *Vedanta Sutras*. "In his lectures and writings, he refuted the Mayavada of Sankara, demonstrated that the Upanishads did not teach a strict monism and built up the philosophy of the Visishtadvaita, which reconciled devotion to a personal God with the philosophy of the Vedanta". Ramanuja also tried to unify the sect by a reform of temple ritual. Though he retained the caste differences as essential, he was eager to spread the doctrine of Bhakti among the Sudras and even among outcastes. Due to his wide travels throughout India for the dissemination of his system, the Sri Vaishnava religion came to wield great influence in North India in later times.

The period after Ramanuja witnessed important changes in the Vaishnava religion. After Ramanuja, differences arose among the Sri Vaishnavas in the interpretations of the doctrine, especially of the theory of *prapatti* (surrender), leading to differences in observances. In the beginning the differences related to philosophical explanations, but later they grew in number and finally resulted in a schism among the Sri Vaishnavas during the time of Pillai Lokacharya((end of the 13th century) and Vedanta Desika (c 1380 A.D.). The Sri Vaishnavas became sharply divided into two sections, the Tenkalais and the Vadagalais or the sourthern and northern schools, the leaders being Pillai Lokacharya and Vedanta Desika respectively. Henceforth each school had its own succession of Acharyas.

Nimbarka, a Telugu Brahmin from Nimbapur in the Bellary district (Andhra country) was a younger contemporary of Ramanuja. He became the founder of a new sect allied to , yet distinct from, that of Ramanuja. His school of thought was based on the doctrine of bheda-bheda *i.e.*, God, soul and the world were identical, yet distinct. Nimbarka accepted the doctrine of surrender (*prapatti*) and translated it into a total devotion to Radha and Krishna*.

With Madhva (12th-13th centuries A.D.) the great Vaishnava teacher of the Karnataka region, there came about a complete pluralism in the ideas regarding the world, the soul and God. A prolific writer, he found support for his teachings mainly from the Puranas. According to him, the Universe is ruled by God as two persons—Vishnu

* The cult of Radha and Krishna is a special feature of Vaishnavism in Bengal. Chitanya (15th-16th centuries A.D.) who was the chief exponent of the cult seems to have drawn much inspiration from Nimbarka. Vallabhacharya, a Telugu Brahmin and a contemporary of Chaitanya, was also an exponent of this cult.

and Lakshmi—and the individual souls are eternally distinct from Him and are themselves of different orders. He advocated *bhakti* to Krishna as taught in the *Bhagavata* but Radha has no place in it.

At the close of the 13th Century, there arose in Maharashtra a number of poet-saints reminding the Alvars of the Tamil country. The popular songs of these poet-saints stirred the people of the region into fervent devotion to Vishnu. The earliest and most notable among them was Gnyandev who was the author of an extensive work on the *Bhagavat Gita*. His work reflects the *advaitic* trend of philosophy and also lays great stress on *yoga*. This movement continued to exist till the time of Tukaram, the last of the great teachers of the line and a contemporary of Sivaji.

Vaishnavism continued to be one of the dominant forces in the life of the people of South India and admittedly exercised a noble and sweet influence on life. The Vijayanagar rulers of the 13th-17th centuries were great patrons of Vaishnavism. While early centres of Vishnu worship received due attention from them, new centres also came to be established all over South India. The successors of the Vijayanagar rulers in the South also kept alive the noble traditions established by the Rayas in extending their patronage to the Vaishnava religion.

SAURAM

(THE FAITH OF SURYA)

Plant life is necessary for the growth and sustenance of animal life. The entire vegetable kingdom derives nourishment through rain and dew which fall during the season of Dakshinayana, and attain fruition during Uttarayana by the warmth that it obtains from the Sun-God, Surya. It is the All-Meriful Narayana who is the indwelling spirit in the Sun that is the source of this nourishment and fruition.

We worship the Sun on Makara Sankranti day as the agency through whom Isvara bestows on us the necessities of life. Fresh turmeric, which is in evidence in the pooja, *is symbolic of auspiciousness. Sugarcane stands for whatever is sweet in life. Grain, plantain and coconut are symbolic of the plenty of the season, which, along with sweetened rice, are offered to the Sun. The overflowing and abundant good things that support our life are the gifts of the All Merciful Providence personified in the Sun.*

—H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI

अरुणसरोरुहसंस्थः त्रिदृगरुणोऽरुणसरोजयुगलधरः ।
कलिताभयवरदो द्युतिबिम्बोऽमितभूषणस्त्विनोऽवतु नः ॥

Let Ina, the Sun God, Who is seated on the red lotus, Who is ruddy like the three-eyed Siva, Who carries a red lotus in two of His four hands, conferring fearlessness and fruition by the other two hands, Who shines in the sky and is adorned with profuse ornaments — Let Him protect us.

Here in this *sloka,* which is to be found in Sankara's *Prapanchasara,* he uses the words *nah* (us) ; 'Let Ina protect *us*' ; it is universal prayer. This is a reminder to us of the Supreme-most Mantra, *Gayatri,* in which too the Power dwelling within the Sun-God Surya is implored to direct the thoughts of *all — dhiyoyo nah prachodayat.*

Surya-worship as a separate Faith has not been in vogue for quite some centuries now. But in Sankara's days the faith should have been prevalent to an extent — we learn of the Surya-cult having been practised by a band of followers under the lead of Divakara near Trivandrum.

Whatever His independent status, Surya (Aditya) is named first in the five divinities worshipped by followers of Sankara in the *Panchayatana* :

Adityam, Ambikam, Vishnum, Gananatham, Mahesvaram

(*Picture* : Bronze of Surya with His consorts Chaya and Suvarchala in Suryanarkoil)

Photo : VISVANATH

WORSHIP OF THE SUN

By

DR. V. RAGHAVAN

"सूर्य आत्मा जगतः तस्थुषश्च"

" The Sun is the Soul of all that moves and is stationary ". *Rg Veda*, I. 115. 1.

When we speak of the worship of the Sun, we are really dealing with an international religion, a religion which in the 3rd Century A. D. Rome was poised against Christianity in a bid to take over as the world religion. But the worship of the Sun, *Mitra* as He is known in His sway in the Middle East and the West, was as old as 1400 B.C. when in Anatolia, at the place called Bagozkoi, in a treaty between two ruling dynasties, the Hittites and the Mittanis, in a language almost Sanskrit, *Mitra*, along with the Vedic gods, Indra, Varuna and Nasatyau or Asvins, was invoked. The worship of the Sun was part of the State religion of the Hittites and the Sun was regarded as the King of Gods, the God of right and justice and the impartial surveyor from above of the deeds of men (*Karmasaksin* and *Jagaccaksus* as we would say). As the God of peace-contract, He always figured in the treaties that Kings concluded. Here is the prayer to Him by the Hittite King Muwatallis : " Sun-God of Heaven ! My Lord ! shepherd of mankind ! .... daily thou sittest in judgment upon man, dog, etc. " And in another prayer : " The inspired lord of justice art thou, and in the place of justice, thou art untiring." Another interesting fact is that like the language of the tablets, and the names of the Vedic deities, the conception of the eastern origin of the Sun, points to the Indian origin of the Sun-worship of Asia Minor of the middle of the second millennium B.C.

The latter spread of Mithraism in Europe was from the Mithra of the Avesta, where Mithra was next only to Ahura Mazda. Avestan Mithra was the lord of the wide pastures, truthful, vigilant with a thousand eyes and ears; ' Mithram ' meant ' compact ', ' Mithradruj ' was a promise-breaker ; His companions were Saraosa, Srosa or Susrusa = obedience and Rashnu = justice. The following prayer is from the Avestan hymn to Mithra, the Mihir Yasht (X):

> " I will worship Mithra, who is good, strong, supernatural, foremost, mercifuly incomparable, high-dwelling, a mighty strong warrior. Valiant, he is equipped with a well-fashioned weapon, he who watches in darkness, the undeceivable. He is what (is) strongest among the very strong ; he has by far the greatest insight among the gods. Fortune attends him, the valiant, who with his thousand ears and ten thousand eyes is the strong, all-knowing, undeceivable master of ten thousand spies." (X 170-1).

With the growth of the Persian Empire, the Maga or Magi priests also became powerful all over Asia Minor and they, in a great measure, became responsible for the devolopment and spread of the Mithra cult all over this area, paving the way for its further spread into the Hellenic world and the Roman Empire through warriors drawn from Asia, and merchants and other seafarers from the

East. But before we come to this phase, let us see the Sun-God and His worship in other countries and ancient civilizations.

In Egypt, the Sun-God was called *Re* or *Ra-Atun* and from the fifth dynasty onwards, all Kings considered themselves, like their Surya-vamsi counterparts of India, sons of *Re* and added *Re* to their own names. In the 14th Century B.C., Akhenaton established a religion round the Sun-God Aton. The Pyramids, which were astronomically oriented, were Sun-monuments. At On, called Heliopolis by the Greeks, the Sun-God was believed to have revealed Himself in the form of a pyramid-shape stone within the temple. The Sun, as the traverser of the sky, was described as a winged bird, a falcon, a description which can be compared with the Vedic description of the Sun as Tarksya, Suparna, Garutman and Hamsa ; also the Egyptians had a curious conception of the crawling Sun as a Beetle, which has its echo in one of our names for the Sun, the *Patanga*, figuring in some Vedic hymns E.g. Rv. X. 177. 1, 2; 189.3. The Pyramid was not only the magnification of the Solar-symbol stone mentioned above, but it is also, by soaring with its height into the skies, the symbol of the entombed King ascending to and joining the Sun-God.

The Calendar stone and the Sun-disc among the monuments of the Aztechs of Mexico show a conception of Universe with the Sun as the centre of all life. The Aztechs conceived of Time as of four ages, (*cf.* the four *yugas*), and called each age a Sun, as He was the presiding deity. The Incas of Peru called themselves sons of the Sun. Sacrifices and a number of rites including a Sun-dance, were offered by American Indians to their Sun-God.

The Sun, Shamash, was the tutelary deity of the local dynasty of the town of Sippara in Mesopotamia and a representation of this Sun-God in human form with rays issuing from his shoulders is seen in a Sumerian Seal of 2800 B.C. He was the upholder of truth and justice and the promulgator of the laws. He is represented in Assyria as a flying disc.

The Japanese belief in their Kings being direct descendants from the Sun-God is well-known. The close association of the Sun and Royalty was a prominent feature in most ancient civilizations. The Parthian monarchs considered themselves as brothers of the Sun.

The Chinese believed in ten Suns and had several Sun-myths.

Mithraism mixed with local beliefs and took over additional related ideas. Thus in Chaldea, Mithraism was influenced by astrology and the planets and the Zodiac and their influences on human affairs. It mingled in parts of Asia Minor with the Mother Goddess, Anahita, and in Greece with Hermes. Greece had its own Sun - God in Helios. Royalty took up Mithra as their talisman and symbol of glory. The concept of the 'Invincible Sun' '*Sol Invictus*', as the protector of the Empire and the Emperors, was particularly developed in Syria and Chaldean-Syrian Solar pantheism later exerted strong influence on the whole of the Roman world. Nero, perhaps the first Roman Emperor to be initiated into the Mithraic mysteries, had an enormous statue of himself set up for being worshipped as the Sun-God. And as in the Hittite-Mittani treaty of thousand six hundred years before, in the treaties of the Roman Empire also, Mithra was invoked and altars dedicated to him by contending kings. Of Mithra monuments in Europe, which have survived destructions by Muslims, there are about 500 sculptures and 400 inscriptions, extending from the Scottish borders to the borders of Hungary, as also in parts of Africa. They are particularly numerous along the German and Danubian borders. There are still some Mithra temples and frescoes that have escaped Christian iconoclasm of the 4th century A.D., in Rome. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., in Rome alone there were more than a hundred temples to Mithra in different parts of the City, both inside and outside the City walls. From the remains of the structures and the frescoes and from the inscriptions that survive, as also from the writing of some Christian Fathers, we can reconstruct the details of this Mithraism which had, according to a writer[1], spread like wild fire throughout the Empire in the first four centuries A.D.

Mithra was worshipped in a natural mountain cave by the side of some running water and accordingly Mitra shrines were raised on such a natural background. The rising of the Sun and the bursting forth of light from amidst the rocks was symbolised in the cave, the image of the celestial vault.

[1] G.S.R. Mead, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, TPH.

References to the rock, Parvata, and the waters, Samudra or Salila, are common in the Vedic descriptions of Mitra and Savita. E.g. Rv. X. 158. 3:

चक्षुर्णो देवः सविता, चक्षुर्न उत पर्वतः ।

His mysteries were celebrated within the dark of caves, where there was the sculpture of Mithra slaying the Bull, altars and other reliefs and drawings on the surrounding walls, including the scene of the sacred Meal.

The iconography of Mithra shows his chief exploit as the slaying of the Bull, evidently the symbol of seasons and weather. Other details of His iconography comprise the presence of a *crow* as a heavenly messenger. In Chinese Sun-myths, a raven was believed to reside in the Sun. As in the case of the cave, *Guha*, the symbol of the heart, we have in the Veda also the symbolism of *Vāyasa*, crow, and other birds, for the fleeting Sun. There is also a scorpion and a lion ; also a representation of Mithra as an archer. All these, together with the idea that Zervan, the God of Time, re-appeared as Mithra and that Mithra held the globe as Kosmokrater (ruler of cosmos) and supported the Zodiac, show an amalgamation of the old ethical Mithra with the warrior Mithra of the Kings and the Sun as the astronomical and astrological hub ; the Bull, the Lion, the Scorpion, and the Archer point to the signs of the Zodiac, Vrsabha, Simha, Vrscika and Dhanus and the seasons they stand for. Mithra is also described as being carried in a chariot, driven by a solar deity, other than Mithra, namely Helios-Sol, the light-giving charioteer, who may be the counterpart of our *Aruna.* A dog that is depicted as a 'faithful companion of Mithra' may be compared to our *Sarama*, Deva-suni. When mingling with the Orphic doctrines, Mithra was identified with the god of the Rays, Phanes, born of an Egg. In a Hadrian Wall stone relief, Mithra's birth from an Egg is shown, in the midst of the signs of the Zodiac, which reminds us of our Sun-name pointing to His Egg-birth, *Hiranyagarbha* and *Martanda.* The number 'seven' played a part in Mithraic mysteries, in which seven stages of spiritual progress were formulated. Here also we may compare our conception of seven Suns and the seven horses for the Sun; as also the seven *Bhumis* of Yoga. Thus Mithra had developed into a 'universal and all-embracing divinity.'

Answering the question 'Why the Oriental Religions spread ?' Franz Cumont says :[1] These religions represented a more advanced type in the evolution of religious forms. They gave greater satisfaction to the senses, to the intelligence and lastly to the conscience. They taught man how to reach a blissful state in which the soul was freed from bodily tyranny and suffering, through contemplation and the artistic aids of music and dance ; compared to the infantile nature of the prevailing religion, they were sacerdotal, prescribed rituals, penances, and purifications, asceticism ; compared to the prevalent vague and un-enthusing notions, they offered a definite view of after-life, survival of the soul and the attainment of happiness. They thus offered " greater beauty of ritual, greater truth of doctrine and a far superior morality ". And " Of all the Oriental cults none was so severe as Mithraism, none attained an equal moral elevation, none could have had so strong a hold on mind and heart. " According to Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, I Vol. edn. p. 358) " There can be no doubt that the Mithraic religion proved a formidable rival to Christianity, combining as it did a solemn ritual with aspirations after moral purity and a hope of immortality. " So much so that Renan observed that " If Christianity had been stopped in its growth by some deadly disease, the world would have become Mithraic."[2] Julian was the last Emperor who was a declared Mithraist ; he gave a ' Hymn to the Sun' and glorified Mithra as the One God of whose power, all other gods were but different aspects. But the victory of Constantine and his vision of Christ proved the turning point and with the banning of Mithra worship and destruction of Mithra monuments by Christians, who had now gained an upper hand, Mithraism began to fade out by about 400 A.D. But Mitharaism did not recede without leaving its lasting marks on Christianity, which, to make itself popular with the people, adopted Mithraic architecture, rites and festivals. The 25th December was the popular festival of Mithra's birth, and it was taken over ; the Meal of the Mithra cult, the idea of 'eating of My body and drinking of My blood' were also taken over as the Eucharist. The bull that was destroyed by Mithra was identical with Mithra who thus sacrificed Himself. Baptism,

1. In his *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, Dover Publications, New York.
2. In his book on Marcus Aurelius.

Communion, Resurrection, all these cardinal ideas, Christianity had to absorb, before it could supplant Mithraism.[3]

II

We shall now swing back to another 1500 years before Bagazkoi where we first met Mitra and see him in his own Vedic world in India. Mitra appears in the Rgveda in a number of names and forms and if there had not been in the Vedas, such extensive references to the Sun and Solar and other celestial luminaries including the constellations, our knowledge of the age and antiquity of the Vedas would have been poor indeed. The Solar deities dominate verily the Vedic horizon. Yaska gives the threefold classification of the Vedic deities into the terrestrial, the atmospheric and the celestial. In this way, we have three primary deities Agni, Vayu and Surya.

तिस्र एव देवता इति नैरुक्ताः । अग्निः पृथिवीस्थानः, वायुर्वा इन्द्रो वा अन्तरिक्षस्थानः, सूर्यो द्युस्थानः । Nirukta VII.

Under Surya are comprehended a world of deities ; hence his prominence in the Vedic worship, including what we are enjoined to do everyday at dawn, midday and evening. The Vedic sacrifice which was co-ordinated to the year and the seasons and the movements of the Sun proclaims again the dominance of the Sun as the Lord of the year, Samvatsara. Says Sankara in his Chandogya-bhashya:

सर्वयज्ञानां च कार्यनिर्वृत्तिरूपः सविता महत्या श्रिया दीप्यते ।

There are about 133 separate hymns in the Rgveda alone to the different Solar deities, apart from hymns in which some of them figure jointly ; there are about 2000 and odd references to them, the references to Surya and Aditya being too numerous to count. The Solar deities thus praised are Mitra, Surya, Savita, Pusan, Vishnu, Vivasvan, Adityas, Aryaman, Bhaga, Amsa, Daksa, Usas and Asvins. The two twilights and the Dawn or Dawns, including their long Arctic forms, claim the largest number of individual hymns.

Mitra of whose form and sway outside India we have been speaking, has one full hymn in the Rgveda but with Varuna, his close associate in the Avesta, he occurs far oftener in the Rgveda. Mitra-Varuna are the most powerful of Vedic conceptions and to them jointly we owe two of our greatest Vedic Rshis, the two Maitravarunis, Vasistha and Agastya. Mitra-Varuna form two aspects of the same deity, he who uncovers or spreads in the morning and he who covers and envelops in the evening. In the Atharva Veda, too, the two are praised together as the vigilant supervisors and moral mentors of mankind. "The worderful divine array, the Eye of Mitra and Varuna, the Sun is indeed the soul of all that moves and stands still."

चित्रं देवानामुदगादनीकं
चक्षुर्मित्रस्य वरुणस्याग्नेः ।
आ प्रा द्यावापृथिवी अन्तरिक्षं
सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्च ॥ I. 115.1.

Here rises the beautiful, the one common Lord of all mankind, witness to everything, the eye of Mitra and Varuna, rolling up all darkness as if a sheet of leather."

उद्वेति सुभगो विश्वचक्षाः
साधारणः सूर्यो मानुषाणाम् ।
चक्षुर्मित्रस्य वरुणस्य देवः
चर्मेव यः समविव्यक् तमांसि ॥ VII. 63. 1.

We saw how Mitra became the patron-god of royalty in his Western form. In the Rks, he is lauded as Raja and Suksatra.

अयं मित्रो नमस्यः सुशेवो
राजा सुक्षत्रः अजनिष्ट वेधाः ॥ III. 59. 4.

The first two Mantras of the hymn on Mitra may be quoted to bring out the several aspects of the deity: Mitra speaks to men and stirs them. He supports earth and heaven; he watches people with un-winking eye ; to this Mitra we make our oblation.

मित्रो जनान् यातयति ब्रुवाणः
मित्रो दाधार पृथिवीमुत द्याम् ।
मित्रः कृष्टीः अनिमिषाभि चष्टे
मित्राय हव्यं घृतवज्जुहोत ॥ III. 59. 1.

Let the men who offer you oblations O Mitra! be pre-eminent, as also those, O Aditya! who, according to your ordinances, pay obeisance to you ; he who is aided by you is not slain nor vanquished ; neither from near nor from afar does any trouble, come to him.

3. *See* H. Stuart Jones on Mithraism in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, VIII, pp. 752—9 ; M. J. Vermaseren, *Mithras, The Secret God.* Chatto & Windus, London 1963.

प्र स मित्र मर्तो अस्तु प्रयस्वान्
यस्त आदित्य शिक्षति व्रतेन ।
न हन्यते न जीयते त्वोतो
नैनमंहो अश्नोत्यन्तितो न दूरात् ॥ III. 59.2.

The moral aspect of the Solar deity, Mitra, Savita, etc., which we saw in Avestan and other Western Mithraism, is very prominently and often mentioned in the Vedas, when he is praised singly or with his double Varuna. He is the Spy of the Universe. Spasam visvasya (Rv. IV. 13. 3) ; he is often called Nr-caksa and Visva-caksa, the supervisor of poeple. He is born of Rta and is the upholder of Rta, the moral order.

X. 85. 1. ऋतेन आदित्यास्तिष्ठन्ति ।
VII. 66. 12-13. यदोहते वरुणो मित्रो
अर्यमा यूयमृतस्य रथ्यः ॥
ऋतावान् ऋतजाता ऋतावृधो घोरासो
अनृतद्विषः ।

It may be noted that the Adityas are here called also the formidable enemies of untruth. The Adityas see the good and bad inside the people.

अन्तः पश्यन्ति वृजिनोत साधु ॥ II. 27. 3.

He is not only the brilliant and vigilant Eye above but also the divine benevolent Eye that bestows on us long life and health and well-being.

तच्चक्षुर्देवहितं शुक्रमुच्चरत् । पश्येम शरदः शतम् ।
जीवेम शरदः शतम् ॥ VII.66.16.

The Adityas are so considerate that like birds they spread their protective wings over their supplicants and give them happiness.

पक्षा वयो यथोपरि व्यस्मे शर्म यच्छत ।
VIII. 47. 2.

He destroys all evils अप विश्वा दुरिता बाधमानः (Rv. I.35.3). With a golden arm and omniscient, Savita moves between Heaven and Earth destroying all disease and pervades the entire firmament with his glory.

हिरण्यपाणिः सविता विचर्षणि-
रुभे द्यावापृथिवी अन्तरीयते ।
अपामीवां बाधते वेति सूर्य-
मभिकृष्णेन रजसा द्यामृणोति ॥
Rv.I.35.9.

With a golden arm, the life-giving Lord who leads us best and gladdens us, who is endowed with riches comes before us and being lauded, protects us against evil spirits in the nights (Rv. I.35.10)

हिरण्यहस्तो असुरः सुनीथः
सुमृळीकः स्ववाँ यात्वर्वाङ् ।
अपसेधन् रक्षसो यातुधानाः
न स्थाद् देवः प्रतिदोषं गृणानः ॥

Adoring the Sun who is beyond darkness and sin, who is the supreme among the Gods, may we also attain to the supreme light. (Rv. I.50.10)

उद् वयं तमसस्परि ज्योतिष्पश्यन्त उत्तरम् ।
देवं देवत्रा सूर्यमगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तमम् ॥

O Sun! possessing a light which is beneficent to the whole world! Rising and ascending the high Heaven, please destroy my inner afflictions, as also those of my external body. (Rv. I.50.11)

उद्यन्नद्य मित्रमह आरोहन्नुत्तरां दिवम् ।
हृद्रोगं मम सूर्य हरिमाणं च नाशय ॥

O Savitar! destroy all the evil and bestow on us all good (Rv.V. 82.5).

विश्वानि देव सवितर्दुरितानि परा सुव ।
यद् भद्रं तन्न आसुव ॥

Invoking jointly the several Solar deities Savita, Bhaga, Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, the Devotee prays for welfare (Rv. VIII.18.3).

तत् सु नः सविता भगो वरुणो मित्रो अर्यमा ।
शर्म यच्छन्तु सप्रथो यदीमहे ॥

Another joint prayer to the several Solar deities—As they rise today, may Surya, the flawless Mitra, Aryaman, Savita, and Bhaga extend to me their riches. VII-66-4.

यदद्य सूर उदितेऽनागा मित्रो अर्यमा ।
सुवाति सविता भगः ॥

For a third joint prayer to several Solar deities for manifold welfare and several good things of life, the whole hymn Rv. II.27 may be cited.

Like an engineer Savita has centered the beam and the pillar of the vault of Heaven, and has set the world in happiness. He has made the Heaven yield waters and has shaken, as it were, the horse of the cloud tied above. (Rv. X.149.1).

सविता यन्त्रैः पृथिवीमरम्णा-
दस्कम्भने सविता द्यामदृंहत् ।

अश्वमिवाधुक्षद्धुनिमन्तरिक्ष-
मतूर्ते बद्धं सविता समुद्रम् ॥

Savita who bears the Heavens is universally desirable. (Rv. X-149-4)

धर्ता दिवः सविता विश्ववारः ।

By reason of all this, the Vedic poet calls the Sun the Gem of the sky. (Rv. VI.51.1; VII.63.4)

One of the common prayers to the Sun is for his blessings for long life and for being able to look at the Sun all the time. (Rv. X. 36.14)

सविता पश्चातात् सविता पुरस्तात्
सवितोत्तरात्तात् सविताधरात्तात् ।
सविता नः सुवतु सर्वतातिं
सविता नो रासतां दीर्घमायुः ॥
उद्यन्तं त्वा मित्रमहो दिवे दिवे ।
ज्योग्जीवाः प्रति पश्येम सूर्य ॥ (Rv. X. 37. 7)

Indeed as the Taittiriya Aranyaka (I.14.1) says: Aditya is effulgence, brilliance, strength, fame, all the faculties of seeing, hearing etc., self, mind, indignation, thought, death, truth, friendliness, the various elements wind, ether etc., life-breath, the protector of the world, the creator, anything and everything, happiness, food, life, immortality, the universe, the creator, the year. Such is the great Spirit, the Sun, the Lord of the Beings.

आदित्यो वै तेज ओजो बलं यशश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रमात्मा मनो मन्युर्मृत्युः सत्यो मित्रो वायुराकाशः प्राणो लोकपालः कः किं कं; तत्सत्यमन्नमायुरमृतो जीवो विश्वः कतमः स्वयंभूः प्रजापतिरिति । संवत्सरोऽसावादित्यो य एष पुरुष एष भूतानामधिपतिः ।

It is with the same rays with which he produces heat that he produces rains, from rains vegetation, from vegetation food, from food life and strength ; and austerity, faith, intellect, thoughts, mind, peace, ideas, memory, knowledge ; from knowledge one attains bliss which is the Brahman and the source of everything.

याभिरादित्यस्तपति रश्मिभिस्ताभिः पर्जन्यो वर्षति पर्जन्येनौषधिवनस्पतयः प्रजायन्त ओषधि-वनस्पतिभिरन्नं भवत्यन्नेन प्राणाः प्राणैर्बलं बलेन तपस्तपसा श्रद्धा श्रद्धया मेधा मेधया मनीषा मनीषया मनो मनसा शान्तिः शान्त्या चित्तं चित्तेन स्मृतिँ स्मृत्या स्मारँ स्मारेण विज्ञानं विज्ञानेनाऽऽत्मानं वेदयति तस्मादन्नं ददन्त्सर्वाण्येतानि ददात्यन्नात्प्राणा भवन्ति भूतानां प्राणैर्मनो मनसश्च विज्ञानं विज्ञानादानन्दो ब्रह्म योनिः ।

Already in the Rgveda the Sun is prayed to, for immortality—Amritatva. (Rv. I. 110.3)

तत् सविता वोऽमृतत्वमासुव ।

Of the Sun and immortality we shall see more as we come to the Aranyakas and Upanishads. There are some characteristic descriptions of the Sun in terms of different kinds of birds traversing space, Tarksya, Suparna, Vayasa etc. (Rv. X, 177. 1.2 ; V. 47.3 : I. 191.9 ; VII. 63.5 ; V .47.3). (Rv. X. 37. 7). The Bull which we saw in Western Mithraism is seen in the Rv. as an image of the Sun. Rv. V.47.3 and I. 189.1 He is described as the wheel, Chakra in I.175.4; IV.28.2. V.29.10.

Each of the names of the Solar deities referred to above emphasises an aspect of the Sun. Mitra whom we saw in Avesta and Western Mithraism as the Lord of Peace and compact in war, friendliness, and Guardian of promise and promoter of victory appears with the same ideas in the Taittiriya Samhita, II.1.8.4.

संग्रामे संयत्ते समयकामो मित्रमेव स्वेन भागधेयेनोपधावति स एवैनं मित्रेण संनयति विशालो भवति व्यवसाययत्यैवेनम् ।

Aryaman is the same as Mitra or friend. Bhaga is a giver of bounty and fortune ; according to Yaska he is the Sun of the forenoon. Aryaman is apportioner, an aspect of Bhaga. In several hymns Mitra, Varuna, Savita etc. are referred to as Puta-Daksa, endowed with purified strength, but separately Daksa meaning 'the dexterous' is also mentioned as a form of the Sun. Savita is the inspirer and stimulator and he is the deity of the great Gayatri which we all adore. Pusan is the Lord and protector of the pathways and cattle, and vivifier, one of his epithets being Pustimbhara. Viyasvat is the Lord who shines forth. Of all the Solar deities Vishnu deserves special notice and several of the incarnations with which Vishnu is associated in mythology could be traced in the descriptions of Solar deity Vishnu in Rg Veda. The Kaustubha on his chest is the Sun himself. Visnupada

is the sky itself. Varaha is also a solar phenomenon, as also Trivikrama of three strides. The association of the Sun with Indra, led to the Upendra form of Vishnu later.

It is in the well known Mantras of Surya Namaskara in the Taittiriya Aranyaka that we have the full picture of the Sun as the Lord of the year and seasons. Here we have also descriptions of the phenomena relating to the Sun and light. The Mantras here refer also to the number of Suns which gradually developed into the concept of twelve Suns. (Dvadasa Adityas). In one Mantra we have the following seven Suns—Aroga, Bhraja, Patara, Patanga, Svarnara, Jyotisiman, Vibhasa. Kasyapa is mentioned as the eighth form. In another we have the mention of Mitra, Varuna, Dhata, Aryaman, Amsa, Bhaga, Indra and Vivasvan.

A passing reference should be made to Surya, the daughter of Surya the Sun, whose marriage with the Asvins forms the subject-matter of Rv. X. 85. For it is the Mantras uttered at her marriage that we use to this day for consecrating all marriages.

We shall now come to the deeper esoteric worship of the Sun as it evolved from some of the Mantras of the Rv. Samhita already referred to and in the Aranyakas and Upanishads which specialised in esoteric worship. The Taitt. Aran. (II. ii.2) says that a Brahmin attains all welfare by contemplating upon the rising and the setting Sun as the Supreme Brahman itself. By such meditation, he becomes Brahman itself.

उद्यन्तमस्तं यन्तमादित्यमभिध्यायन्कुर्वन्ब्राह्मणो विद्वान्त्सकलं भद्रमश्नुतेऽसावादित्यो ब्रह्मेति । ब्रह्मैव सन्ब्रह्माप्येति य एवं वेद ॥

The Sun and Solar light and energy have a close relation to Vak or Sonant energy. The Mantra par excellence of the Vedas, Gayatri or Savitri, has had a great role in the whole field of esoteric worship, including the Upasana of the Supreme Being. Sonant energy and Solar energy are considered as two forms of the same Jyotis and the Sun is Himself the Rk, Yajus, and Sama Vedas; it is the threefold Vedic knowledge that shines forth as the Sun. The eight-letter Mantra of Aditya, Saura Ashtakshara, '*Ghrnih Surya Aditya Om*' is to be meditated upon and one realises Aditya as the Light, Bliss, Immortality, the Brahman and all the three worlds.

आदित्यो वा एष एतन्मण्डलं तपति तत्र ता ऋचस्तदृचां मण्डलँ स ऋचां लोकोऽथ य एष एतस्मिन्मण्डलेऽर्चिर्दीप्यते तानि सामानि स साम्नां लोकोऽथ य एष एतस्मिन्मण्डलेऽर्चिषि पुरुषस्तानि यजूँषि स यजुषां मण्डलँ स यजुषां लोकः सैषा त्रय्येव विद्या तपति य एषोऽन्तरादित्ये हिरण्मयः पुरुष इति ॥

There are two kinds of Upasanas which we come across in the Upanishads, the Pratika Upasana and the Ahamgraha Upasana. In the former an object is itself meditated upon as a symbol and in the latter the indwelling spirit in the thing as identical with one's self is meditated upon. In both these forms the Sun occurs in Upasanas in the Upanishads particularly in the two big Upanishads, Chandogya and Brhadaranyaka. The best known is the Madhu vidya in Chand. 3.

ओम् । असौ वा आदित्यो देवमधु तस्य द्यौरेव तिरश्चीनवंशोऽन्तरिक्षमपूपो मरीचयः पुत्राः । तस्य ये प्राञ्चो रश्मयस्ता एवास्य प्राच्यो मधुनाड्यः । *etc.*

where the Sun is described as embodying in its rays in all the four directions the four Vedas and in its upward rays the Madhu-nadis. There is a further form in which the Sun does not move, rise or set but remains hanging in the middle, motionless as it were. The Gayatri is related to this Upasana of the Sun, as also the five centres in the heart in which the Sun is said to be present.

In Brhadaranyaka I.5.23 it is said that it is in the life breath, Prana, that the Sun rises and sets.

अथैष श्लोको भवति यतश्चोदेति सूर्योऽस्तं यत्र च गच्छति इति, प्राणाद्वा एष उदेति प्राणेऽस्तमेति । *etc.*

In Brhadaranyaka II.4.5, the Sun is described as the honey or the most enjoyable thing of all beings and he who is present in the Sun and the effulgent immortal being within the eye of men—these two are identified as the Self, the Immortal, the Brahman which is everything.

अयमादित्यः सर्वेषां भूतानां मध्वस्यादित्यस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । *etc.*

The same idea is taken up again in Brhadaranyaka V.4.2.

तद्यत्तत्सत्यमसौ स आदित्यो य एष एतस्मिन्मण्डले पुरुषो यश्चायं दक्षिणेऽक्षन् पुरुषः । *etc.*

Already in the Taittiriya Aranyaka we noted the Mantra referring to the golden Purusa in the Aditya.

य एष अन्तरादित्ये हिरण्मयः पुरुषः । I. 10.13.
य एष आदित्ये पुरुषः स परमेष्ठी ब्रह्माऽऽत्मा
I. 10.63.

The Chandogya reverts to this golden Purusa who is of golden hair and is all gold up to his very finger tips.

अथ य एषोऽन्तरादित्ये हिरण्मयः पुरुषो दृश्यते हिरण्यश्मश्रुर्हिरण्यकेश आप्रणखात्सर्व एव सुवर्णः ॥

These are referred to as the Aditya, the Antaraditya and the Akshi Vidyas.

Concluding the Aditya Upasana the Chandogya says at the end of Chapter III that even as when the Sun rises, beings and their actions and desires rise up, and the Sun is greeted all round with shouts of joy, even so he who adores the Sun as the Brahman and thereby attains the Brahman, is attended on all sides by people who raise shouts of joy in his honour.

अथ यत्तदजायत सोऽसावादित्यस्तं जायमानं घोषा उलूलवोऽनूदतिष्ठन्त्सर्वाणि च भूतानि च सर्वे च कामास्तस्मात्तस्योदयं प्रति प्रत्यायनं प्रति घोषा उलूलवोऽनूत्तिष्ठन्ति सर्वाणि च भूतानि सर्वे चैव कामाः । स य एतमेवं विद्वानादित्यं ब्रह्मेत्युपास्तेऽभ्याशो ह यदेनꣳ साधवो घोषा आ च गच्छेयुरुप च निम्रेडेरन्निम्रेडेरन् ॥

Among the lesser Upanishads the Mandala Brahmanopanishad sets forth the teaching on Suryopasana which Yajnavalkya, who got his Veda from the Sun Himself, is taught by Aditya. The Suryopanishad contains several Sun Mantras the practice of which secures a number of material and spiritual gains. The Aksi Upanishad expatiates on the Upasana of Surya through the Chaksusmati Vidya for the obtaining of unimpaired eyesight ; the Savitri Upanishad is also important as it deals with the Upasana of Gayatri and, as many do not know, this is the only text which speaks about the Bala and Atibala Mantras which we know Visvamitra, the Seer of the Gayatri, taught Rama and Lakshmana in the Ramayana. There is also a Suryatapini Upanishad published by the Adyar Library in their Volume 'Unpublished Upanisahds' in which the Sun as the Supreme Deity and his Upasana are described. The twelve Suryas, Mitra, Ravi, Surya, Bhaga, Khaga, Pusan, Hiranyagarbha, Marici, Aditya, Savita, Arka and Bhaskara[1] are mentioned. Several Surya Mantras including the Saura Ashtakshara are described, as also the method of contemplation of Surya, his Puja and his Yantra.

In philosophy we know of the two paths of Devayana and Pitryana, the former referring to the path of light leading to liberation through the Sun. These two paths are also derived from the course of the Sun and the Sun as a medium of spiritual progress.

III

In the heroic annals of ancient India, in which the two epics were born, the Sun figures along with the Moon, as in other ancient civilizations of the world, as the progenitor of the line of kings—the Suryavamsa. He is the prime ancestor of the Kings of the Ramayana. Naturally his worship occurs in the Ramayana. Particularly when Rama feels somewhat fatigued on the battle field of Lanka, Sage Agastya, son of Mitra-Varuna, teaches Rama the hymn of *Aditya-hrdaya* which Rama recites thrice and feels reinforced ; the Sun looks at Rama in great joy and asks Rama to hurry up and kill Ravana.

एतत् त्रिगुणितं जप्त्वा युद्धेषु विजयिष्यसि ।
आदित्यं प्रेक्ष्य जप्त्वा तु परं हर्षमवाप्तवान् ।
अथ रविरवदन्निरीक्ष्य रामं
मुदितमनाः परमं प्रहृष्यमाणः ।
निशिचरपतिसंक्षयं विदित्वा
सुरगणमध्यगतो वचस्त्वरेति ॥

Yuddha. 107. 26, 29, 31.

It is not so well known to many that earlier, in the context when Sita swoons on seeing the magic head of Rama brought before her by Vidyujjihva, her friend Trijata gives Sita the same advice that she might turn to the Sun and seek solace and strength from Him.

गिरिवरमभितोऽनुवर्तमानो
हय इव मण्डलमाशु यः करोति ।
तमिह शरणमभ्युपेहि देवं
दिवसकरं प्रभवो ह्ययं प्रजानात् ॥

Yuddha. 33. 36.

This relation of the Sun to battle and victory would remind us of the Sun as a God of war and victory in western Mithraism, dealt with earlier.

1, The list of twelve Adityas differs from text to text. Another list is Dhatr, Mitra, Aryaman, Rudra, Varuna, Surya, Bhaga, Vivasvan, Pusan, Savitr, Tvastr and Vishnu.

In the Mahabharata, the best known episode is the exiled Yudhisthira worshipping the Sun in the beginning of the Vana-parva and obtaining from the Sun the vessel of inexhaustible food, Akshayapatra. In this connection we have a hymn of 108 names (Astottarasatanama-stotra) of the Sun by Yudhisthira. Earlier, in Adi parvan, in the story of the marriage of Surya's daughter Tapati, there is a stotra on Surya by Sage Vasistha, another Maitravaruni.

IV

We shall now take a quick survey of the state of Sun worship as seen from historical evidences. Sun-worship had a somewhat interesting development in historical times. As we have seen, it was the oldest Vedic worship of the country, and its continuity is borne out by archaeological evidence also. As shown by Jitendranath Banerjee[1] there are some very ancient coins with wheel and lotus repes ntations and these are not Buddhistic but symbols of the Sun. But into this ancient and native sun-worship flowed the one which successive waves of immigrants from Persia, the Magas of Sakadvipa, brought with them; their Mitra or Mihira cult, gave a fresh impetus to it. They probably started coming in during the first two or three centuries of the Christian era, when after a boom, the Mitra cult began to decline in the West and Middle East. The Sakadvipi Maga priests who came in the earlier waves of immigration got absorbed into the Brahmin community, with of course a special appellation, Maga, Bhojaka or Sakadvipi. The story of the chiselling of the Sun by Tvastha which the Puranas say was done in the Sakadvipa is known to poet Kalidasa (Raghu. VI. 32). Many Gupta kings and chiefs bore Sun names. More than one monument and epigraph bears witness to the new vogue that Sun-worship gained during the Gupta age: we have thus the Mandasor Sun temple and inscription (A.D. 473-4); the Indore Copper Plate grant of Skandagupta I (A.D. 465-6) and in the reign of Jivitagupta II of the later Guptas of Magadha, the Deo Baranark inscription mentioning Sun-worship and the Sun-priest Bhojaka Suryamitra. It is highly probable that ancient Brahmin-names with Mitra-endings denote a Maga connection. In the sixth century, Varahamihira who was in all likelihood of Maga descent, describes the iconography of the Sun in Persian style (Brhatsamhita 57.46-48)[2] and refers to Magas as the priests proper for Sun-worship (ib. 60.19). Hieun-Tsang describes a glorious Sun-temple attracting a thousand pilgrims a day at Multan[3] around which a large community of Magas had settled, and another splendid Sun-temple at Kanauj[4]. The great Sun temple Martand in Kashmir belongs to 8th Century A.D. Inscriptions refer to the father and grandfather of King Harshavardana of Kanauj, Prabhakaravardhana and Adityavardhana, both of these bearing Sun-names, as Paramaditya-bhaktas. The second day of Emperor Harsha's periodical congregations was dedicated to the Sun. Poet Mayura of the Court wrote the famous hymn Suryasataka and is believed to have been cured of leprosy by the grace of the Sun God. Bana, in his Harsacharita, confirms this vogue of Sun-worship by describing Prabhakaravardhana's daily adoration of the Sun and the recital three times a day of the Mantra called Adityahrdaya. This Adityahrdaya may be the text now found in the Yuddhakanda of the Valmiki Ramayana (Agastya-Rama-Samvada) or the other longer text (Krsna-Arjuna-Samvada) assigned in many manuscripts to the Bhavisyottara Purana. Of this last-mentioned Purana, whose original text may go to the Gupta times, the opening book called the Brahma-parvan is, in most part, on the worship of the Sun and on the history of the Magas or Bhojaka Brahmanas from the Sakadvipa. Inscriptions continue to mention these Maga Brahmanas as such[5]; and for his part Medhatithi, on Manu (II. 6) would keep Magas and their worship of the Sun distinct from that of the Sun according to the Veda and the Panchayatana-worship and classify the Bhojaka as being outside the Vedic pale. Besides the portions in the major Puranas devoted to Sun-worship, other Saura-literature of this period comprises the Samba-Upapurana, known to Alberuni, and the *Saurasamhita*, a text in 700 verses,

1. The Representation of the Sun in Brahminical Art, *Indian Antiquary*, August 1925, pp. 161-3.
2. The Vishnudharmottara also prescribes this 'Udicya-vesa' with coat, boots, the Persian Avyanga etc. for the Sun-image.
3. Watters, II. 294.
4. Ib.I.p. 352.
5. D. R. Bhandarkar, *Epi. Ind.*, IX. p. 279, inscription dated 861 A.D.

a manuscript of which, dated 941 A.D. is known[1]. At the close of the chapter on the consecration of images in his Brhatsamhita (Ch. 59.22), Varahamihira says that one should look up the *Savitra* for more details regarding Sun-worship, and Utpala explains that the reference is to a *Saura Sastra* of that name ; under 59.19, Utpala speaks of the procedure set forth in the *Saura darsana*.

V

Some references have already been made to Puranas containing Saura material. Several of the well-known Puranas have incidental descriptions of the worship of the Sun, Brahma, Skanda, Varaha, Matsya, Agni, Garuda, Naradiya and Markandeya which has eleven chaps. on the Sun (102-110) and the stories of his birth etc.; the section includes three hymns to the Sun. Special note however should be taken of the Bhavisya and Samba which are regular Saura Puranas. The Sun and his worship described in these two are of the type of Sun-image and forms of worship as practised by Maga Brahmanas who had come from Sakadvipa. The Samba Purana in 84 Chaps. available in the Venkatesvara Edition, deals with Samba, Krishna's son, being cursed with leprosy, his worship of the Sun for becoming cured, his bringing of the Maga Brahmans to Mitra Vana or the forest of the Sun near Multan, the story of the Sun being chiselled by Visvakarma in Sakadvipa, characteristics of Sun's image, his temple, methods of his worship, Sun as the supreme deity of worship for attaining all objects including Mukti, the consorts of the Sun-God Samja, Rajni, Chaya, etc.,[2] the twelve names of the Sun and the twelve Adityas, the evolution of the Universe as born of the Sun, Sun's attendants[3], performance of Sun's festivals, Sun-mantras, several Sun-hymns, centres of Sun-worship in India like Sutira which seems to be same as Konark, Kalapriya and Mitravana (Mulasthana). Kalapriya is near Kanauj and its Sun-temple is the one referred to by Hieun-Tsang. Here was the temple of the Sun called Kalapriyanatha before which, as V. V. Mirashi has shown, Bhavabhuti's three plays were staged; it is significant in this connection that Bhavabhuti prays to the Sun in the prologue to his Malatimadhava. There is a lot of common matter between the Samba and the Bhavisya Puranas. The latter part of Samba Purana seems to represent a Tantric text on Sun-worship called Jnanottara.

The Bhavisya Purana in its earlier part gives all the above-mentioned episodes relating to Samba and the Maga Brahmanas and the worship of the Sun as the supreme God. Besides these there was a regular Aditya Purana but with this title there are at least three Puranas glorifying Siva, Vishnu and the Sun. Of the last, with which alone we are now concerned, only some extracts dealing with some aspects of Sun worship are available. No full mansucript of this Purana has come to light. This may be identical with old Saura Purana dealing with Sun, of which again we have no mss. yet, and which is different from the Saura Purana printed in the Anandasrama and dealing with Siva.

VI

Among other texts on Surya worship, which are known from mss. or citations, the following may be mentioned : *Suryarahasya* tantra, by Vrajaraja ; *Suryagama* or *Sauragama* quoted by the Dharma sastra writers Raghunandana and Kamalakara ; *Suryadipancayatana-pratisthapaddhati* by the well-known Dharma sastra writer of Banaras, Divakara ; *Suryavalokana-prayoga* on how to gaze at the Sun ; *Sauradharma* and *Sauradharmottara* quoted by Hemadri, Raghunandana, Kamalakara and several other Nibandha writers ; and *Sauratantra* quoted by Ksirasvamin on Amarakosa. There are also several amorphous texts called Saura etc. setting forth details of Suryopasana, texts giving Suryapuja, Surya-mantras etc. The *Prapancasarasamgraha* of Girvanendra Sarasvati deals at some length in its fourteenth and fifteenth patalas with Saura Mantras, Yantras etc., following the treatment of the same in Sankara's Prapanchasara, patala fourteen. Texts called Trca, Trcakalpa and so on deal with Suryopasana and the great Sakta authority Bhaskararaya wrote a *Trcabhaskara*.

VII

Reference was already made to Surya-hymns. The most popular one with us is the Adityahrdaya of the Ramayana. There are other texts, shorter and longer of this name assigned to other sources, like the Bhavisyottara. There are several namastotras, Dvadasa, Astottarasata, and Sahasranama, the last mentioned being assigned

1. Haraprasad Shastri, Report of Search for Sanskrit Mss., 1895-1900. p. 5.
2. Other wives are Svarna, Suvarcasa, and Niksubha.
3. Such as Mathara, Pingala, Danda.

to the Bhavisyottara. There are hymns of the Sun from Puranas and Tantras. Of hymns in the line of the *Suryasataka* of Mayura, there are a few worthy of mention : The *Samba-pancasika*, fifty verses ascribed to Samba, Krishna's son, and published in Kavyamala (No. 13) and in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series (No. 104). This hymn itself is mentioned in the Varahapurana and it has in its K.M. edition the learned commentary of the Kashmirian Saivite writer Ksemaraja and in the Trivandrum edition, another equally learned anonymous commentary. This is easily the most important of Surya-stotras of the classical times ; it integrates Yoga and the philosophy of Vak (speech) with the worship of the Sun who is conceived here on advaitic lines as the Supreme Being. Next in importance is the *Aditya-stotra-ratna* by Sri Appayya Diksita, with his own commentary ; this deals with the adoration of Aditya by himself, as Brahman and as being presided over by Siva. On the model of Mayura's hymn, the well-known Panditaraja Jagannatha wrote the Sun-hymn called Sudhalahari. Gopala Sarman, Srisvara and Kodandarama are three other poets who produced each a Suryasataka probably on the same Mayura model.

VIII

Some of the renowned and ancient Sun-temples of the North have been referred to. But the greatest gift of Sun-worship to the art of Temple architecture and sculpture is the Sun-temple of Konark in Orissa, built by King Narasimhadeva of Orissa, 1230-64 A.D. One of the leading dollar-earning temples of India, Konark, fashioned like the chariot of the Sun, is one of the most magnificently carved temples of the country.

In South India, in Hanumakonda in Warangal, the Kakatiya capital, there is a temple with three shrines dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Surya. Andhra has another Sun temple at Arasavalli near Sri Kurmam and on the day of the Shan-mata conference, dedicated to Sun, our Acharya has arranged for special worship to the Sun at this temple. There is hardly a shrine in Tamilnad without Surya in the Navagraha group; some have additionally a separate standing figure of the Sun. The most important of such a separate representation of Surya is the exquisite carving of Surya's chariot with his horses in Gangaikonda-colapuram, which at the bidding of our Acharya, is now receiving special attention and puja. I am told that a similar Surya-ratha is to be seen in Darasuram. There are many shrines where according to Ksetra mahatmya, Surya was worshipped or Surya worshipped Siva.

The lower rock-cut cave in Tiruchi has a series of shrines to the Panchayatana deities including the Sun. The Nagesvarasvami temple in Kumbhakonam of the early Cola age has a separate shrine for Surya. In the Kacchapesvara temple in Kanchipuram, there is a shrine to the Sun, and verses from Mayura's Surya-sataka were inscribed here on the pillars, but only a bit of one of these pillars is now preserved in the Madras Museum. An exclusive Surya Ksetra in Tamilnad is Suryanarkoil of Kulottunga Cola's time.

T. Gopinatha Rao has noticed in his book on Hindu Iconography Sun-images, standing as well as seated in the chariot, from Chitorgarh in Marwar, Ajmere, Ellora; from Haveri, Nuggehalli and Belur in Karnataka; from Gudimallam; from Melacheri near Kaverippakkam. He has also reproduced an interesting Surya-torana from the Sun temple of Junagarh in which eleven Adityas are sulptured on the torana with the twelfth in the inner shrine.

South Indian Sun-sculpture does not show any trace of the 'Udicya-vesha' brought by the Magas.

IX

In the Upanishads we saw the Upasana of Surya as presided over by the Supreme Being Purusa. This Purusa in the Aditya-mandala has also been taken in Saguna form as Surya-Narayana or as Samba. According to the internal preferences of the Pancayatana worshipper, those who prefer Narayana as the indwelling Being contemplate so :

ध्येयस्सदा सवितृमण्डलमध्यवर्ती
नारायणः सरसिजासनसन्निविष्टः ।
केयूरवान् मकरकुण्डलवान् किरीटी
हारी हिरण्मयवपुर्धृतशङ्खचक्रः ॥

and those who prefer Siva contemplate accordingly.

सौरमण्डलमध्यस्थं साम्बं संसारभेषजम् ।
नीलग्रीवं विरूपाक्षं नमामि शिवमव्ययम् ॥

Of Vishnu or Siva, the Sun, along with the Moon, has also been taken as the Eye. Cf. the *Purusa Sukta* :

चक्षोस्सूर्योऽजायत ।

The Sun was born of the eye of the Purusa. There are some composite sculptures of Sun, which may be taken as representing the Trimurtis, Sun, Siva, Vishnu and Brahma with three or four faces. The Martanda-Bhairava image is to represent the Trimurtis according to the *Sarada Tilaka*

ब्रह्म-विष्णु-शिवात्मकाय सौराय योगपीठाय नमः ।

For a probable sculpture of this Martanda-Bhairava, see VI All India Oriental Conference Proceedings, Patna, pp. 243-7. According to the *Subhagodaya* quoted by Lolla Laksmidhara in his commentary on the *Saundaryalahari*, verse 41, Devi also is to be contemplated in the Solar orb:

सूर्यमण्डलमध्यस्थां देवीं त्रिपुरसुन्दरीम् ।
पाशाङ्कुशधनुर्बाणहस्तां ध्यायेत्सुसाधकः ॥

Of Devi, the Sun, along with the Moon, is the brilliant ear-ring, Tatanka.

ताटङ्कयुगलीभूततपनोडुपमण्डला ।

Apart from these is the worship of the Sun Himself as the main object of adoration such as we do in our daily Sandhya. In conclusion I would like to place before you a minimum Saura-programme which you may implement for your welfare : Among Surya stotras, recite the Adityahrdaya, thrice daily or as often as possible ; among forms of worshipping the Sun with Vedic Mantras do the Surya-namaskara by yourself, if you can, or with the aid of your purohita, on Sundays or at least on the birth-days of yourself and other members of your family and whenever there is illness in the house; above all perform your daily Sandhyavandana and Gayatri. It is by the prolonged Japa of Gayatri in three Sandhyas that, Manu says, the Rshis became what they were.

ऋषयो दीर्घसन्ध्यत्वाद्दीर्घमायुरवाप्नुयुः ।
प्रज्ञां यशश्च कीर्तिं च ब्रह्मवर्चसमेव च ॥ IV. 94.

As those who recite our pravara from the Rshis, let us keep up particularly this worship of the Sun than which there is nothing higher, the Gayatri, the Mother of the Vedas, Vedamata. May Gayatri, as Her name promises, save Her reciters!

TEMPLES FOR THE SUN GOD IN INDIA

By

K. V. SOUNDARARAJAN

The antiquity of sun worship is as old as Hinduism. In fact, it would be truer to say that the Sun god had been the pivot of the phenomenal concept of Hindu Pantheon. The Trinity have a fair measure of his part in their make-up. As *Virinchi-Narayana-Sankaratma* and *Jagadeka-chakshus*, he has been epitomised as the original source of all life and light and the most palpable of all Gods. " *Mitro-Janan Yatayati Prajanan Mitro dhatarah prithivim-utadyam Mitrah krsti animisha-bhichaste* " and " *Surya-atma-Jagatas-tastushascha* " have been eloquent Vedic expositions of the all-pervasive and evocative character of Sun God. He is variously hailed as Tvashta, Sambhu, Apammitra, Vivasvan. No wonder, therefore, that he had come up for special worship unlike the other planets such as the moon etc. But the iconography of the Sun, as such, had been initially introduced into India from outside, through the Indo-Scythians and others. The Huns, like Toramana and Mihirakula were sun-worshippers. *Brhat Samhita* (Ch. 58) while describing the *lakshanas* of Sun God states that he is to be ' *udeechya vesham* ' and " *goodham pada-duro yavat* ". Early historic coins explicitly or impliedly uphold this cult. The elevation of the Sun worship to a regular individual shrine for the God is perhaps not much earlier than the 5th-6th century A.D., around the Gupta period. We have references in inscriptions, as for instance, the Mandasor (Rajasthan) record, wherein a temple for Sun is said to have been erected by a guild of silk-weavers from Lata (Gujarat).

It is generally mentioned that Adi Sankara or the Bhagavat Pada—regulated the six-fold cults of Hinduism (Shan-mata), but it should clearly be more appropriate to state that he re-integrated them as parts of the same indivisible cosmic cause or *Paramatman*. The Siva *Panchayatana* system already had the elements of Surya, Siva, Vishnu, Ganesa and Durga, by late-Gupta period. The Karttikeya or Kaumara cult which is the sixth, had become a *swayampradana Devata*, with temples of its own, by 8th Century A.D. at least. The Vishnu *Panchayatana*, however, being on the *vyuha* principle, does not admit of any *Devatantara*, and centres around Vishnu himself with his other manifestations. But Surya and Chandra occur in Anantasayi *ensemble*, as *parivaras*.

The Sun cult was seemingly most popular only in the north and is relatively late in having a temple of its own, in the South. The general reason seems to be that in the manner of considering Vaidic gods, as different from the Agamic, Sun, being a most influential member of the Vedic pantheon did not command, in Agamic worship, a greater status than a *parivara* or lesser *devata*, whether in Saiva or Vaishnava iconography. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, and in the Konkan coast, however, following the integration of Surya, with the Trinity, especially the cult of the Sun had as early an influence and rise as the Karttikeya cult. In fact, it is primarily Gujarat and Rajasthan that respectively fertilised and nurtured the Kumara, and integrated the Surya cults from the Kshatrapa period onwards. A most outstanding

product of such an integration, bequeathed to the Kadambas, Bhojas and Mauryas of the Konkan coast, already in the 6th Century A.D. is reflected in the rock-cut caves at Arvalem (Harvale) near Kudne in Goa territory. Here, in a triple-shrined temple, we find lingas whose *pithas* are all similar, but the linga shafts are in addition to the truly Saivite linga form in the central shrine, showing the circular solar-disc mounted on a shaft, in one case (carrying also a donative record reading ' Sambapuravasi Ravi '), and with a sakti-like spear-head shaft in the other shrine representing, doubtless, the immanence of Karttikeya. Here, is the felicitous, yet full-blooded symbiosis of Surya with Rudra, and Skanda with Rudra respectively.

The diffusion of Sun worship had followed somewhat different patterns all the same, in the north and in the south. The lines of divergence appears to have hinged largely around the subsidiary cult of the *Navagrahas* (of whom the Sun is an astral nucleus) which had begun first as an auxiliary trait in a Siva temple in the north, being shown in a row on the lintels of the *cella* of most of the temples, and had all but disappeared later ; while in the South, they got converted into the separate nexus of worship on a minor scale in all the Siva temples and had become a constant factor from the early mediaeval times. The earliest temples of South India, all the same, do not have even a sub-shrine for the Sun. The *parivara* concept of the Sun first gains ground in the so-called *ashta-parivara* scheme of Saiva as well as Vaishnava usage, the oldest of which, especially in Tamil Nadu, might be datable at least to end of the 8th century A.D. These *ashta parivaras* were to be dedicated apart from the central Siva shrine, to Surya, the Saptamatris, Ganesa, Karttikeya, Durga, Chandesa and Nandi.

In the Vaishnava scheme of *ashta-parivaras*, we have, on the authority of *Vaikhanasagama* Surya as one of the members along with the *dikpalas* and the Sankha-chakra devatas. In the *avarana* concept of concentric circuits of sub-shrines of Vaishnavism also, Surya gets a place, in the second *avarana* and/or the third *avarana*. He is usually placed to the north of the door, facing east.

Then, during the zenith of the imperial Cholas, the vogue of a pointedly prominent worship of Sun happened to receive attention, and soon after, the coalescence of the Sun cult with the *navagrahas* also began. The remarkably picturesque and artistic *kamala-yantra* slab (Fig. I)* of Gangaikondachola-puram is an important land-mark and one of the most spectacular resublimations of the cult into a *tattwa*. The first individual and main temple for the Sun in Tamil Nadu was clearly the Kulottunga-Chola-Marttandalaya at Suryanarkoil (Fig. III), of the time of the Kulottunga I (1060-1118 A.D.). The position of the separate sub-shrine for Sun in a Siva temple, in Tamil Nadu and the environs, was on the east of the temple (either south-east of north-east) facing west. It was shown as a *Koshta devata* or *Vimana-Devata* also, with such an orientation. The same location was further dramatised in the later Chola period into either a *mukha mantapa* or separate *ratha mandapa* drawn by wheels and horses, the spokes of the wheels showing Surya image (Fig. VIII) repetitively. Such chariot-type mandapas face invariably south, and are found at least in a dozen places in Tamil Nadu, the most outstanding of which are at Darasuram, Tribhuvanam, Kumbakonam (Nagesvara) and Tiruvarur in Thanjavur District, and Melakadambur, Vridhachalam, Sendamangalam and Chidambaram in South Arcot District. It is not unlikely that these graphic *ratha* forms gave the required minimum inspiration to the Eastern Ganga King Narasimha of Orissa—who had matrimonial links with the Cholas—to erect his monumental temple for the Sun at Konarak (Fig. II), on the sea-shore.

The accoutrement of Sun and the full *ensemble* of the Sun are the most majestic among the Hindu icons. We have the association of the Surya with the Siva-linga also, along with the Brahma, Vishnu and Lakulisa, as found in the sculputres of Ajmer Museum. We have the typical stockinged feet of the Sun God and the waist-band known as *viyanga* or *ahiyanga*—the usage which etymologically and culturally has an Iranian borrowal. Seven horses are yoked to the Solar chariot which has, however, only one wheel, in the literary and cult concept of *Eka-chakra*, from which the usage of the undisputed domination of an emperor came to be called *eka-chakradhipatya*. The charming maidens, the dawn (Ushas) and the dusk (Pratyushas) accompany him, with drawn bows, discharging arrows to dispel the pall of darkness, apart from Danda and Pingala seated on either side, and Aruna (rarely) shown on the star-board of the chariot. The crown of Sun-god, again, by the earliest

* Photographs ; Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India.

borrowed usage from the Indo-Schythians and Indo-Parthians in the Kushana and early Gupta times, came to be always provided with a flat top.

We may now briefly consider the most outstanding Surya shrines of our land. The most northerly and celebrated individual temple for Sun (Fig. IV) is at Martand in Kashmir, (8th-9th century A.D.).and on the western flank, we have the exquisite *panchayatana* temple at Osian in Jodhpur district, Rajasthan (8th century A.D.), and the unique Sun temple at Modhera (late 10th century A.D.), in Gujarat (Fig. V) where the equinoxial sun ever casts its rays at sunrise directly at the sanctum. The most southerly temple for sun is said to be Suryanarkoil in Thanjavur District where the rather medium sized shrine with a somewhat distinctive octagonal *sikhara* has a later Chola stone figure of Sun God in the sanctum.

The Martand temple of Kashmir represents the very culmination of the aesthetic cohesion achieved by the guild of artisans, working under the inspiration of one of early Kashmir's most celebrated kings-Lalitaditya (724-760 A,D). It was verily an architectural model for most that followed in the valley. Despite its medium size, when compared with some other temples of the region, like the Buddhist edifice at Pandrethan, the grey-stone pile of Martand, covering an area of 62 ft. X 35 ft. for the central structure which rises to a height of 70 ft. in its tallest part and is placed within a cloistered enclosure 220 ft. X 142 ft., shows a majesty of individual parts which are of solid stone masonry, which hold trefoil arches and arcaded cloisters, and significant side chambers for the portico- a departure from other local lay-out. Merging with the mountainous background, Martand is a prestigeous structure of the later 8th century A.D., with the outlandish charm of its steep triangular penhouse gables - so typical a part of Kashmir temple style.

The Sun temple at Osian in Rajasthan, one of the creations of the Gurjara-Pratihara king Vatsaraja, in the last quarter of the 8th century A.D., is of chiselled beauty, picked out of pale pink sand stone. The classic grace of the *ekanda sikhara* of its *rekha nagara prasada* is heightened by the simple yet dignified, square *Sabha mandapa*, embellished by a *vedi* parapet, and climaxed by the rather unique and visually arresting *mukha mandapa* porch, with two tall, slender columns, rising out of the relatively lower surrounding ground level almost like oriental versions of finished Doric or Corynthian columns, to catch up with the terraced stature of the main temple unit.

Of yet another *genre*, but certainly by now grown (late 10th century A.D.) infinitely more extravagant - as the *metier* of the premediaeval times of the prolific temple building propensities of Lata or Gujarat, is Modhera - a word that beckons us verily to a world of consummate dexterity, finished grandeur and magnificent creative spell, in sculptural or surface ornamentation, as well as in architectural organisation. The *sandhara garbagriha* - with spacious porch-openings on the cardinal *bhadra* - matched well by similar but closed *bhadras* on the *gudhamandapa* - should have formed the original unit, to which the Solanki craftsman added their favourite spell-binder,namely, the *ranga-mandapa* or *sringara chouri*, in a gorgeous aesthetic mantle, and a graceful freestanding Torana arch - standing on the very brink of a very harmoniously yet capaciously sunk Rama-kunda or tank, itself embellished by countless mini-shrines integrated with its landings, and a somewhat more conspicuous set of *ekanda* shrines in the main top corner landings - these represent the expansive outlook of the Sun-worshipping Modha brahmin migrants of this place—while the twelve identical life-size carvings of Sun God on the outer walls of the *vimana* and *gudha mandapa* make the temple the very haven of the *dvadasa adityas*. Modhera - whose iconographic charms are many and varied - is only the most celebrated and hand-picked among the scores of temples to Sun-God built by the energetic Maitrakas of Valabhi (Saurashtra), and the more sophisticated Chapotkatas, Solankis and Vaghelas of Gujarat and Kutch.

The earliest individualised representation in the South of the six fold divinity nexus - the apothesis of the *shanmata* (notwithstanding its inclusion of Brahma also to make a tally of seven) is seen in the lower rockcut cave at Tiruchi (Fig. VI). Of Pandyan style and origin, it is to be dated to the early 8th century at least, if not earlier, and is interesting for showing Vishnu and Siva (the latter in a condition perhaps painted or in wall-stucco) in the two main shrines facing each other, while the side-wall depicts, in separate niches, large-sized relief figures of Ganesa, Skanda, Brahma, Surya and Durga. It is the most eloquent evidence for the Trinity cult, intermixed with the *Devatantara* development and truly a proto-*Shanmata* matrix already a century and a half prior to Sankara,

in a prevailing bipolar Siva Vishnu parity that characterised the main stem of Hindu worship.

The temple at Suryanarkoil near Aduthurai in Thanjavur District is an interesting architectural expression and is an *Ekatala alpa vimana*, provided nevertheless with an *upapitha* over which the *adhisthana* mouldings show the *upana padma*, *vritta kumuda*, *kantha* and *vedi*, in *triratha* pattern, followed by a wall with pilasters showing a typically evolved Chola shaft with a corbel showing, however, the *tarangas* on the side bevel sections, and *kapota* which has *nasikas* with deep circular recess for the *kudus*. The niches though present do not carry Surya figures, now perhaps missing, and only the *griva* shows figure of Surya on each side in *samabanga* with Ushas and Chaya as two consorts on either side. This *griva* comes above the *vyalavari* course, followed by a thin octagonal *grihapindi*. The *griva* itself is octagonal in section as is the *sikhara*. The superstructure above the *vyalavari* appears to have been rendered in brick and stucco. On each of the four main corners of the *grihapindi* are shown a horse. The main unit of the temple comprises the *garbha*, *ardha mandapa* and *mahamandapa*, there being an external recession between the first two. To this original unit was added, at a relatively later time, a very large *mukha mandapa* block, with entry from the south. The whole temple is facing west, as is usually the direction which the Sun is to face in a South Indian set up (Fig. VII).

Placed immediately around the temple of the Sun, and aspecting inwards in each case, are found shrines for *navagrahas*, with Brihaspati enshrined within the temple facing Sun-God, and followed in the anti-clockwise direction by Saturn, Budha, Angaraka, Chandra, Ketu, Sukra, Chandesvara and Rahu. These temples are entirely rendered in brick from base to top and are also *ekatala alpa vimana* but showing either octagonal or circular *sikharas*. These do not appear to have any direct architectural or chronological relationship with the main temple and should clearly have been simple pedestalled images originally, but later had been converted into regular small shrines.

The interesting feature of the *griva* of the main shrine, however, is that, in addition to the cardinal niches where the standing Sun God is shown, near the diagonal facets are represented the Sun God in seated as well as standing postures, two on each side, and representing the *Dvadasa adityas*. Thus, a representation of a west-facing main shrine for the Sun temple with an octagonal *sikhara*, and with an *upapitha* though the *vimana* is *ekatala*, would all represent an architectural *archetype* by itself in the South, and of a different type from those of the Sun God, in other parts of India. There is no doubt that the construction of this temple had followed the consolidation of the *pratistha vidhi* of Surya in a Southern temple, nucleating around the other *grahas*.

When we have all the calculated splendours of Martand, Osian, Modhera and Suryanarkoil to laud and cherish, grateful posterity had yet chosen to give the palm only to the colossus of mediaeval Kalinga, the Konaraka tragically truncated, yet withal, regal even in its decrepitude. In greenish schist or fluorite stone, the Jagmohan which alone is preserved in full stands on a 100 ft. side, and rises to an equal height while the *mula mandir*, had it been standing, would have soared to nearly 200 ft. height. The entire composition, seemingly to lend a touch of mobility even to its massiveness, had been conceived as a gigantic chariot drawn by many pairs of wheels at the sides, and a set of seven horses - the Solar chariot's distinction. The wheels, with their exquisitely engraved and carved hubs, spokes and tyres, are the despair of the lapidary, and for their motifs and themes should have exhausted the imagination even of the *silpis* and the hieratic coterie that had master-minded this architectural *magnum opus*, at the behest of Ganga Narasimha deva (1138-64 A.D). The painstaking exuberance of detail of the Jagmohan with the whole *ensemble* of a celestial *cabaret* - all damsels here—standing out on the edge of the platform below the neck of the *pidha* roof, the detached *natamandira* in front, the very spacious temple court with a width of about three or four times the size of the temple, the various creations of the spare hours of the craftsman —like the gigantic elephant and horse frozen in their frenzy - all these are of unparalleled magnitude in architectural organisation. While undoubtedly this was the era that saw the acme of Hoysala, Chola, Kalyani-Chalukya or Guhila master-pieces, Konarka conjures up a vision of the resplendent aura of Sun-God, even more magnificently than any other and, notwithstanding the surfeiting array of its erotic *bandhas* and lewd cameos, it is the touch-stone of the infinite range of the traditional Indian architect in presenting infinity in finite attire.

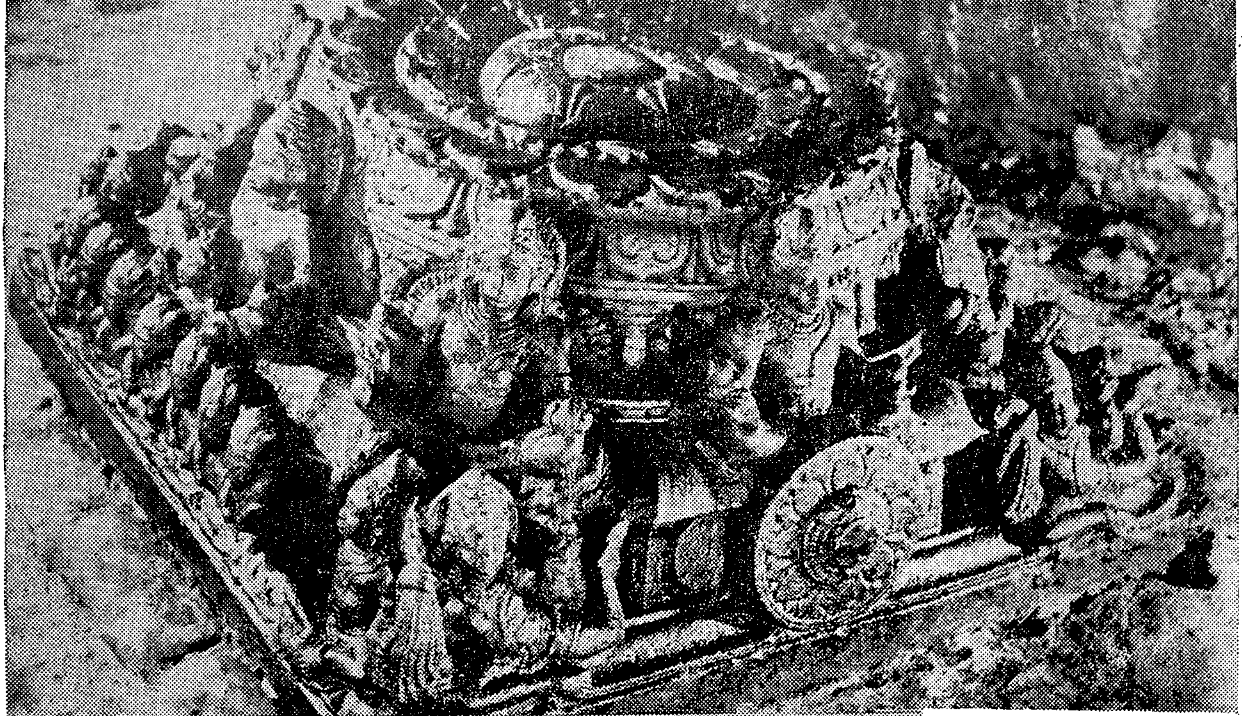


Fig. I. Gangaikonda cholapuram: Kamala Yantras of Navagrahas including Surya.

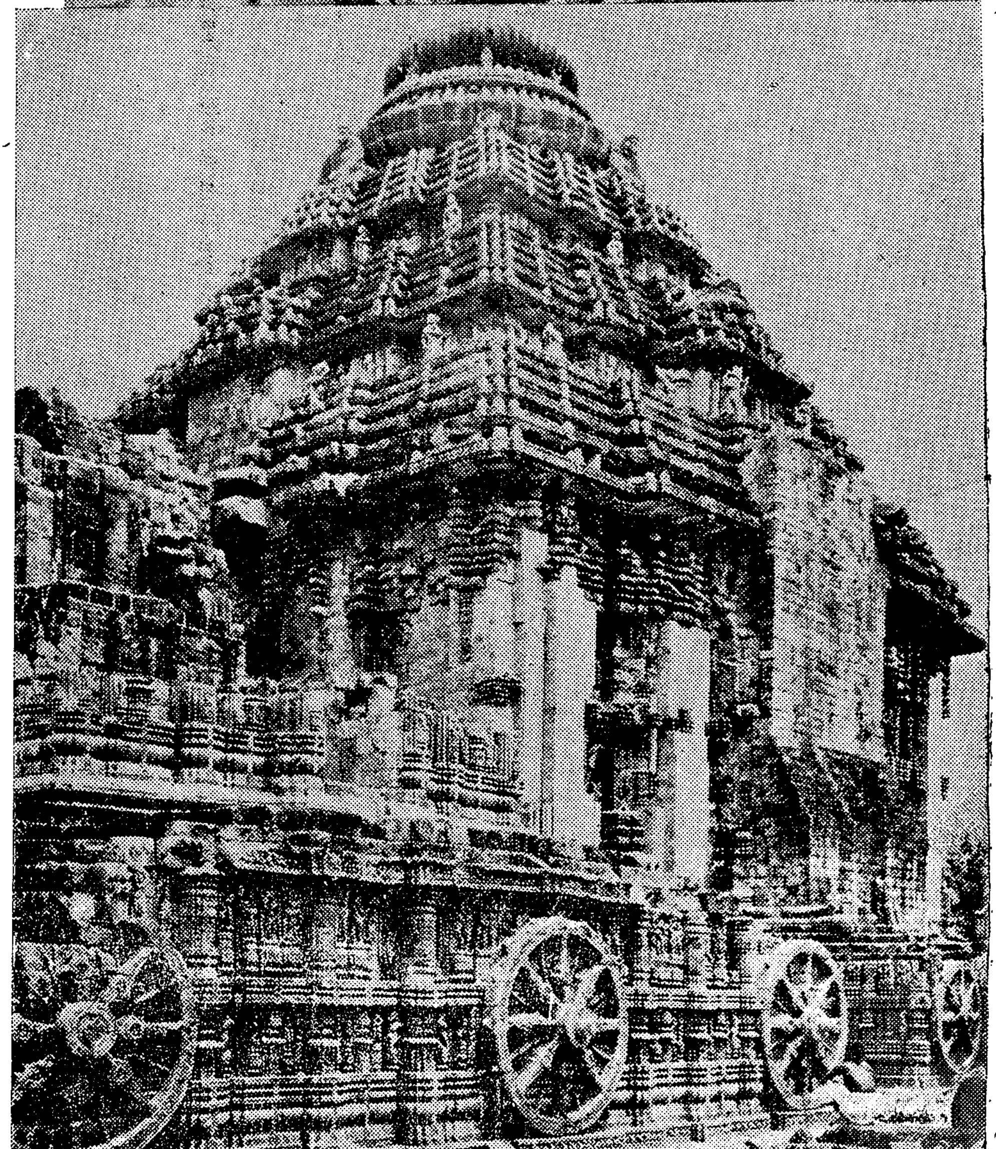


Fig. II. Konarak (Orissa) : Surya temple showing the Jagmohan, with a series of wheels at the bottom.

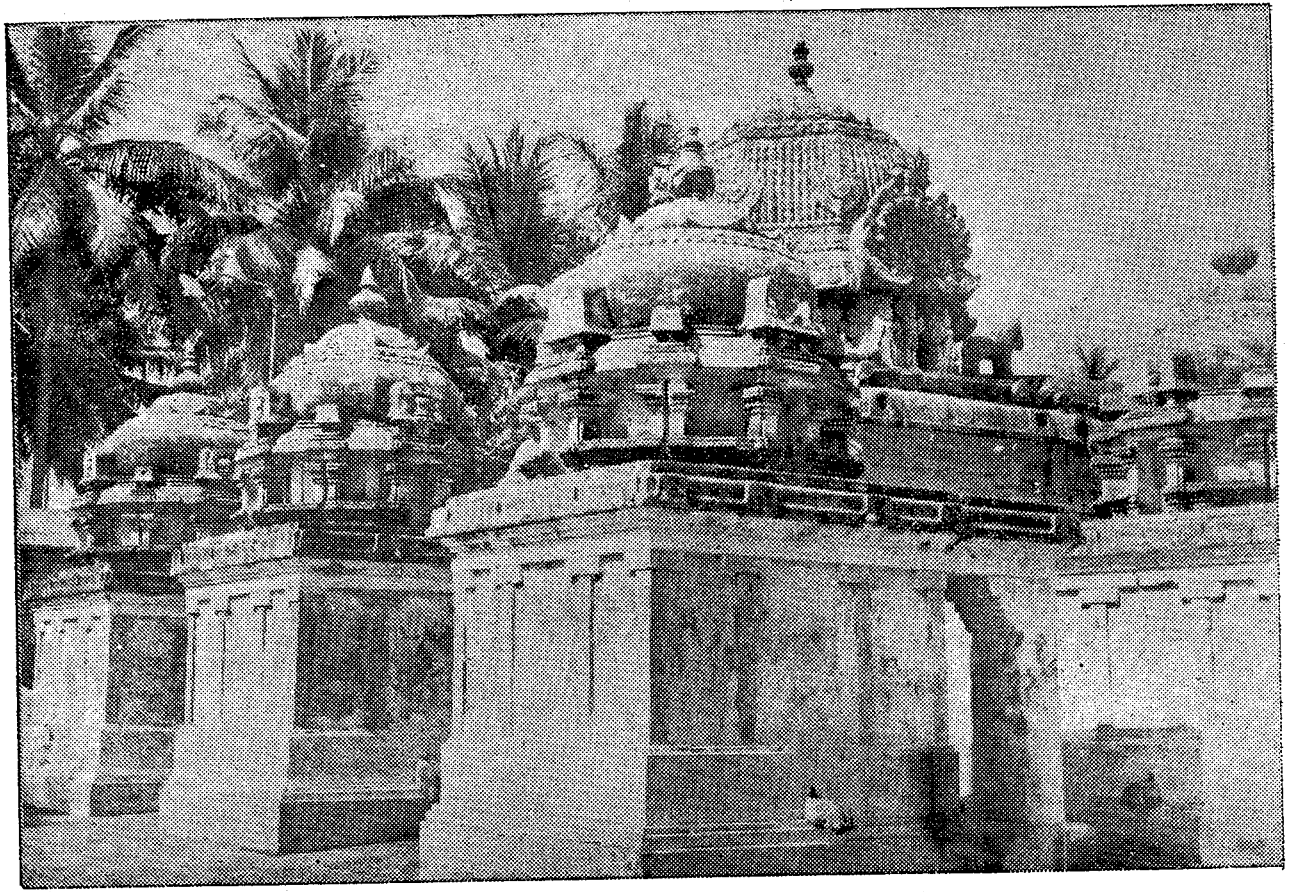


Fig. III. SURYANAR KOIL: Surya-Temple with sub-shrines of other Grahas.

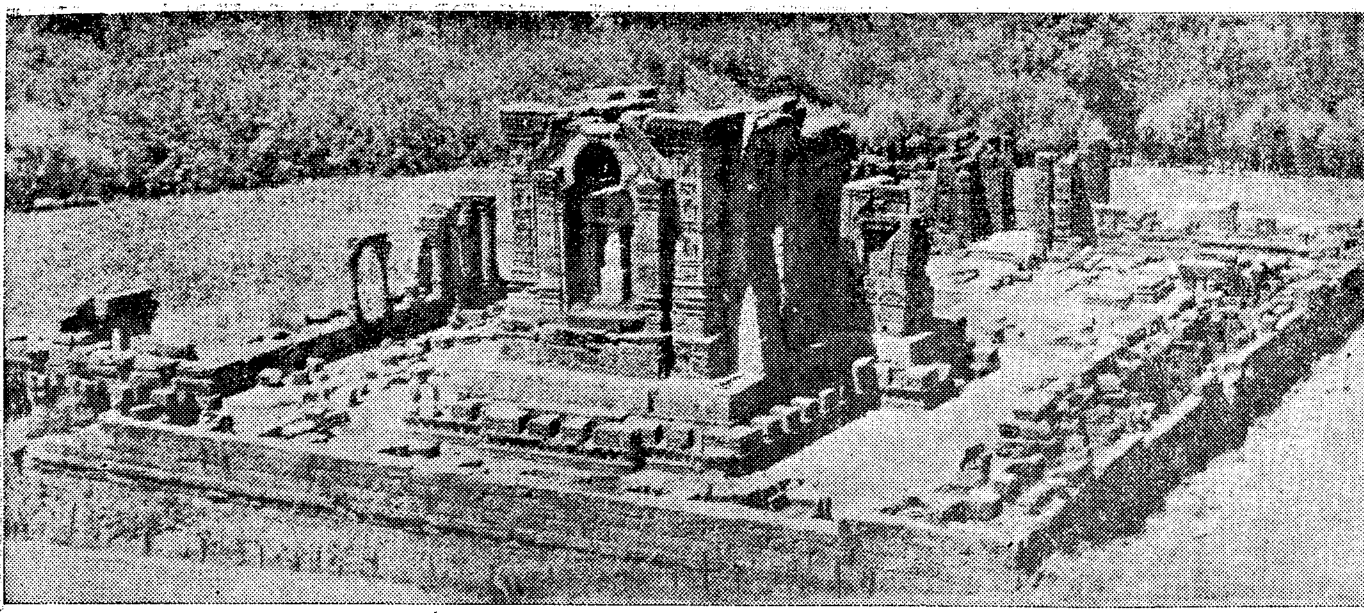


Fig. IV. Sun temple at Martand (Kashmir), now in ruins.

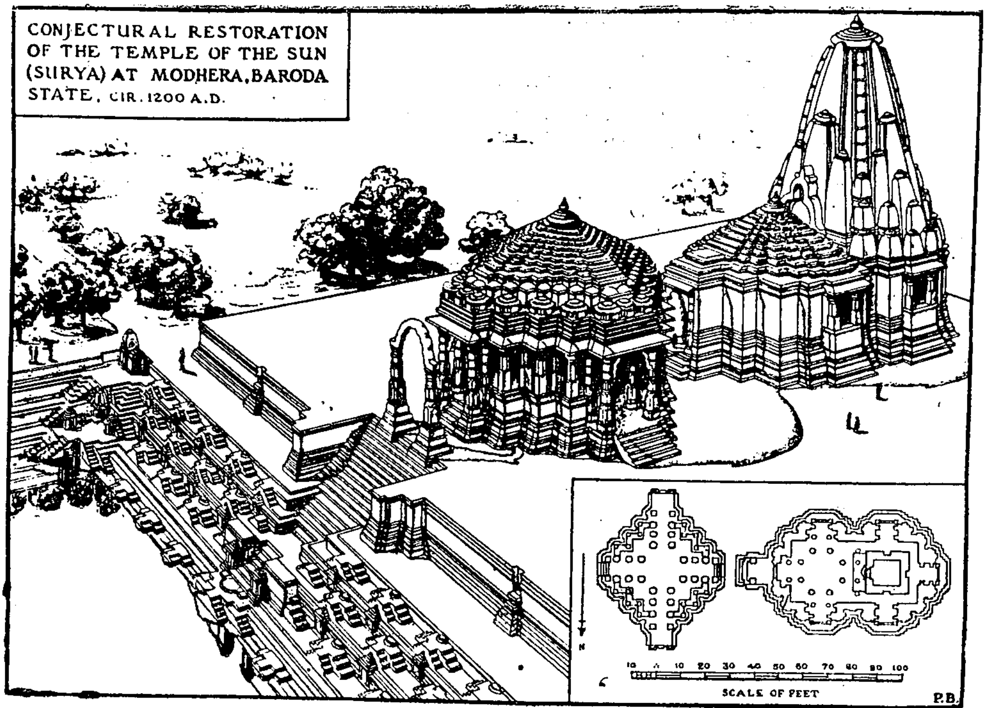


Fig. V

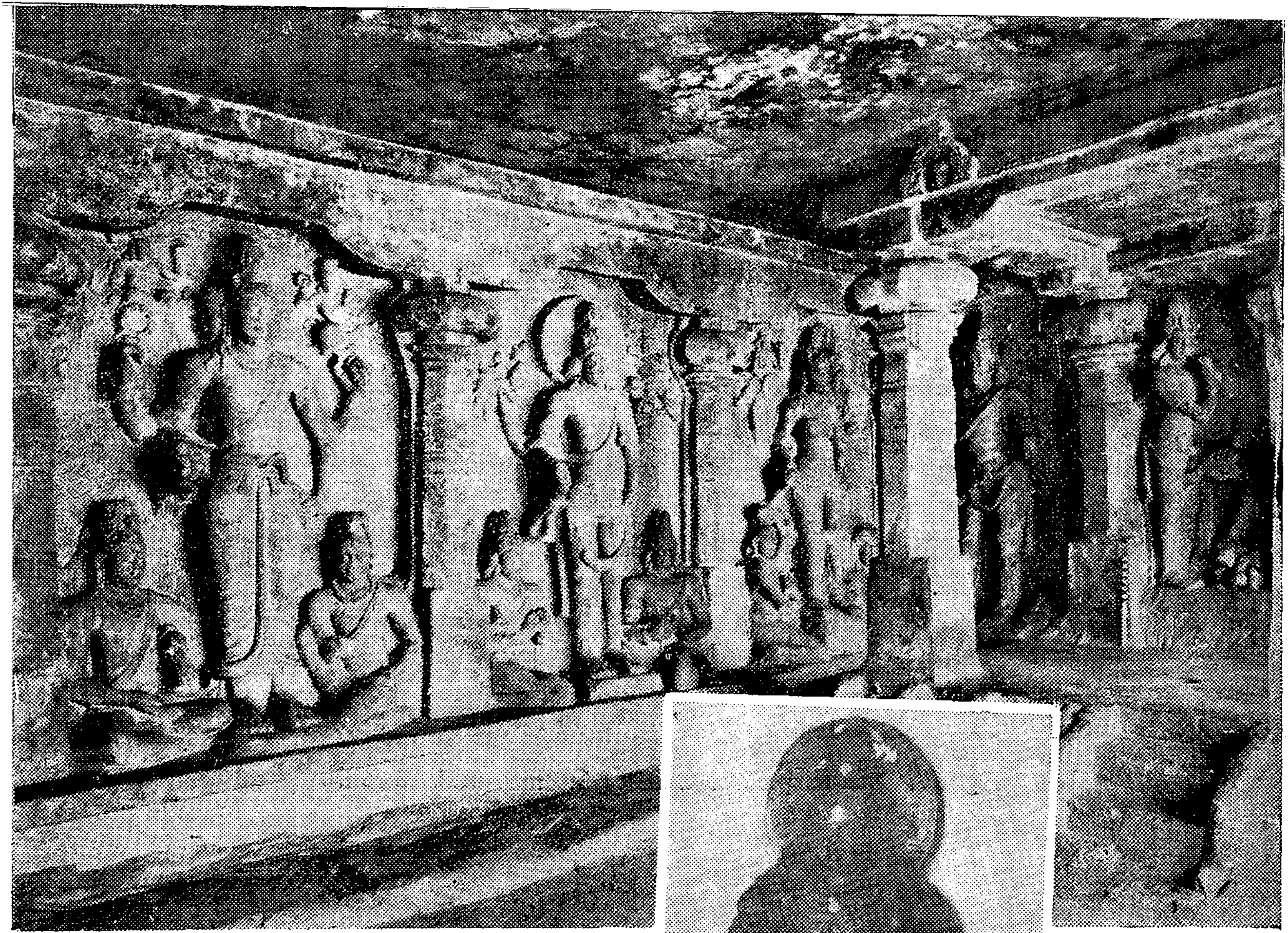
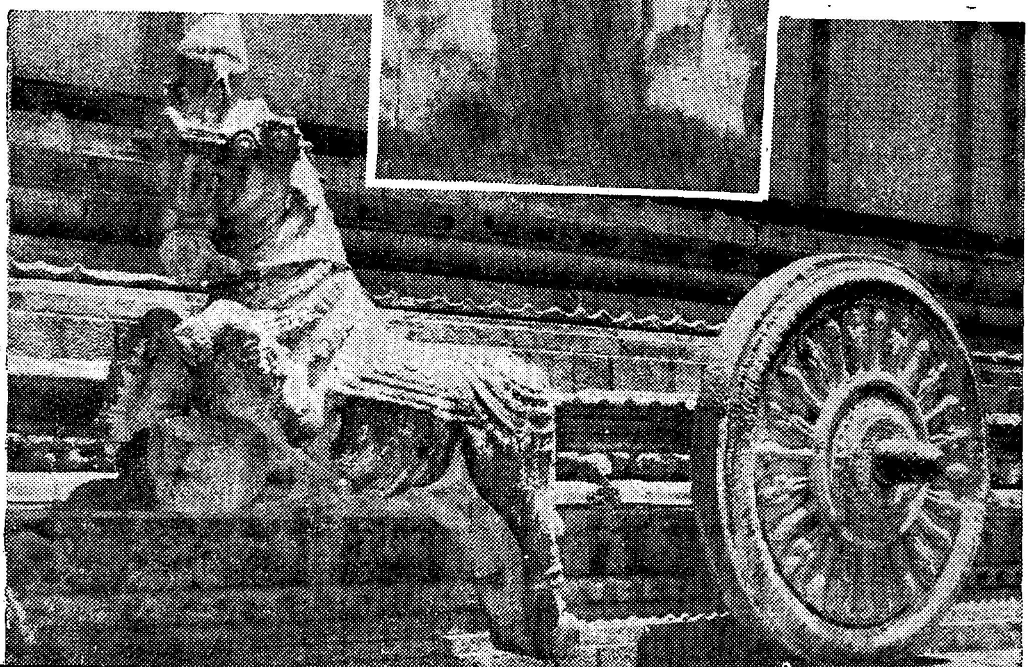


Fig. VI. Tiruchi: Lower Rock-cut cave, interior view showing Sun-God in large niche (second from left).

Fig. VII. The typical Surya image.

Fig. VIII. Kumbakonam, Nagesvara Svami Temple; wheel shows Surya figures between every two spokes.



TAMILS AND THE SUN-GOD

By

NAA. PARTHASARATHY

Sun is one of the great subjects adored and sung with wonder by the Tamil literary works. In almost all countries poets have, as a convention, sung in different languages in praise of Sun's greatness and Moon's gentleness but in Tamil, both in ancient and modern literatures, we have plenty of verses worshipping Sun-God with wonder, and many of them are really significant. In *Tolkappiam* which is the most ancient Tamil work, there is a reference to worship of Sun God.[1] In the Second Volume of *Tolkappiam* dealing with words, a rule is laid down about the verb form to be used for nouns such as 'Vinai', 'Palvarai Deivam', 'Bootham'. This rule includes "Gnayiru", and "Thingal". Senavaraiyar, in his commentary for this says that "Vinai" denotes the God of Dharma and "Sol" means the Goddess of Learning. It therefore seems that Gnayiru (Sun) is regarded as a God and is reckoned along with other deities in the pantheon. Though there is no evidence to show that this grammatical rule denotes the worship of Sun as one of the Six Religious Forms, we can understand that *Tolkappiam* meant the worship of Sun as a God, while telling about the word "Gnayiru". This is the only strong and ancient evidence to prove that Sun was worshipped as God by the Tamils even in the distant past.

Three verses (Nos. 55, 56 & 57)[2] of *Choodamani Nikandu* enumerate forty-nine

1. " காலம் உலகம் உயிரே உடம்பே
பால்வரை தெய்வம் வினையே பூதம்
ஞாயிறு திங்கள் சொல்என வருஉம்
ஆயீரைந் தொடு பிறவும் அன்ன
ஆவயின் வருஉம் கிளவி எல்லாம்
பால்பிரிந் திசையா உயர்திணை மேன."

(தொல் - சொல் - 57)

2. பரிதி பாற்கர னாதித்தன் பனிப்பகைசுடர் பதங்கன்
இருள்வலி சவிதாச் சூரன் எல்லுமார்த்தாண்ட னென்றாழ்
அருண னாதவனே மித்திரனுயிரஞ் சோதியுள்ளோன்
தரணி செங்கதிரோன் சண்டன் தபனனே ஒளியே சான்றோன்
அனலியே அரியே பானு அலரியே அண்டயோனி
கனலியே விகர்த்தனன் வெங்கதிரவன் பகலோன் வெய்யோன்
தினகரன் பகலே சோதி திவாகர னரியமாவே
இனனுடன் உதயன் ஞாயிறெல்லையே கிரணமாலி
விரவும் ஏழ்பரியோன் வேந்தன் விரிச்சிகன் விரோசனன்பேர்
இரவிவிண் மணி யருக்கனேழும் சூரியன் பேர்
பரிதிபின் வட்டம்தானே விசயமாம் பரிதிவீசும்
கிரணமே கரமுமற்றைக் கிளர்ந்த தீவிரமுமாகும்.

(சூடாமணி நிகண்டு 55, 56, 57)

names attributed to Sun such as—Paniappagai (The destroyer of fog), Dinakaran (Maker of the day) etc. As these three verses occur under the heading "Collection of Names of God" we can take it for granted that the author of this Nikandu was referring to the worship of Sun God.

Ettu Thogai is one of the eight (ancient) anthologies. In the opening of Narrinai composed by Baratham Padiya Perundevanar,[3] Sun is spoken of as one of the two eyes of the God Vishnu-the source of all the universe. This idea is based on a fundamental tenet of Hindu faith and is remarkable for its antiquity.

The meaning of this invocation is as follows:—

"The Lord with the spotless discus for whom the entire earth forms the feet; the vast ocean with its pure water goes as vest, the whole heavens form the body, the directions are arms, the moon and the Sun with its light-rays are the two eyes, He who has contained everything within His own Self is regarded as the Source of Scriptures".

In *Purananuru* which is also one of the eight anthologies, the fourth song compares the appearance of a king in his chariot to the rising sun. The poet who composed this verse has obviously enjoyed the splendour of the sun-rise.[4]

Thirumurugarruppadai, the first of the Ten Idylls (*Puthu Pattu*)[5] opens with the following description of sun-rise:

"The Sun, which is praised by all, which moves on the right direction making the world happy, rises above the seas with sparkling lustre and splendour."

Nachinarkiniyar in his commentary for these three lines has given the meaning for the phrase "Palar Pugazh Gnayiru" as the "Sun worshipped by people of all religions". It can be seen from this that all the religious sects coming under Hinduism praise Sun with one-voice.

Silapathikaram is one of the five great Epics of the Tamils. In the first benedictory chapter called 'Mangala Vazthu Padal' the Sun-God is prised as "Oh Sun-God, our adoration to thee, who goes round the Meru Mountain like the royal mandate of the king of Kaveri".[6]

Ilango Adigal, author of this epic offers worship to Sun and also to river Kaveri and the clouds. The sense of duty with which the sun goes round the world without failing to appear over the Meru Mountains, just like the wheel of the royal mandates of the Chola king is eulogised in this verse.

In the course of his narration in his *Panchali Sapatham* the great National Poet Subramanya Bharathi offers worship to Sun-God by means of rendering the great

3. " மாநிலம் சேவடி ஆகத் தூநீர்
வளைநரல் பௌவம் உடுக்கை ஆக,
விசும்பு மெய்ஆகத் திசை கைஆகப்
பசுங்கதிர் மதியமொடு சுடர் கண்ணாக
இயன்ற எல்லாம் பயின்று அகத்து அடக்கிய
வேத முதல்வன் என்ப
தீதற விளங்கிய திகிரியோனே"

(நற்றிணை - 1)

4. நீயே அலங்குளைப் பரீஇஇவுளிப்
பொலந்தேர் மிசைப் பொலிவு தோன்றி
மாக்கடல் நிவந் தெழுதரும்
செஞ்ஞாயிற்றுக் கவினை மாதோ

(புறநானூறு 4)

5. உலகம் உவப்ப வலனேர்பு திரிதரு
பலர்புகழ் ஞாயிறு கடற்கண் டாஅங்கு
ஓவற இமைக்கும் சேண்விளங்கு அவிரொளி

(திருமுருகாற்றுப்படை 1-3)

6. " ஞாயிறு போற்றுதும் ஞாயிறு போற்றுதும்
காவிரி நாடன் திகிரிபோற் பொற்கோட்டு
மேரு வலம்திரி தலான்"

(சிலப்பதிகாரம் - மங்கலவாழ்த்து

Gayatri Mantram into a sweet Tamil song;[7] the song refers to the sacred Vedic hymn:

"We look to the splendid red rays of the Lord of Light; may He inspire our intelligence and lead us".

In his 'New Athichudi' Bharathi has written for the letter (Gna)—"Gnayiru Potru"[8] which means "Worship the Sun". He has composed a prose-poem with the title "Gnayiru". In this he adores the Sun as the god of heroism. He says "What is the relation between light and heat? Light appears when heat increases. We worship heat. Heat is the mother of light. Heat is the rudimentary form of light. Oh heat! thou art Fire and Fire is the God of Heroism. Sun is none but Fire".[9]

Bharathi has also described the Sun as a bubble of the floods of Sakti (Power) and as a flower in the Sakti-Pond[10]. Since he was well-versed in the Vedas and Upanishads he has written copiously about 'Surya Namaskar' or Salutations to Sun.

Though pieces of Tamil literature do not bear any reference to Saura Matam (religious sect worshipping Sun as such) we learn that there was a custom in those days of adoring the Sun. In *Silappathikaram,* before the burning of Madurai, Kannaki cries out to Sun-God and demands justice. Tamil literary works praise and worship Sun-God (as an aspect of Nature). Later the Soura Mata (one of the six great religious classifications) became popular and we find the beginning of this in the evidence in the ancient work of Tolkappiam in the verse beginning with the words "Kalam Ulagam". The sun was classified as a divinity along with the god of Dharma and the 'Palvarai Deivam'. *Silapathikaram* and *Thirumurukarrupadai* give us further proofs in this regard. The Nikandu includes the sun in the list of names of gods and goddesses. All these indicate the custom in Tamilnadu of offering worship to Sun-God.

7. 'செங்கதிர்த் தேவன் சிறந்த ஒளியினைத்
தேர்கின்றோம்—அவன்
எங்களறி வினைத் தூண்டி நடத்துக'
என்பதோர்—நல்ல
மங்களம் வாய்ந்த சுருதிமொழி

(பாஞ்சாலி சபதம்)

8. ஞாயிறு போற்று

(புதிய ஆத்திசூடி)

9. ஒளிக்கும் வெம்மைக்கும் எவ்வகை உறவு
வெம்மை யேற ஒளி தோன்றும்
வெம்மையைத் தொழுகின்றோம்
வெம்மை ஒளியின்தாய், ஒளியின் முன்னுருவம்
வெம்மையே நீ தீ
தீதான் வீரத் தெய்வம்
தீ தான் ஞாயிறு

(பாரதியாரின் வசன கவிதை)

10. "சக்தி வெள்ளத்திலே ஞாயிறு ஓர் குமிழியாம்
சக்திப் பொய்கையிலே ஞாயிறு ஒரு மலர்."

(பாரதியார்)

SAKTAM

(THE FAITH OF SAKTI)

The Absolute is poorna, *full and limitless. The* prapancha (universe) *which is infinitely varied, is also limitless. Even if the limitless* prapancha *is taken away from the limitless Supreme, the limitless Supreme will remain intact. This truth is stated in an upanishad* mantra.

If 2 *is divided by* 2, *the quotient is* 1. *With* 2 *as the dividend, if the divisor is progressively reduced as* 1, *or* ½ *or* ¼ *etc., the quotient will be respectively* 2, *or* 4 *or* 8, *etc. Thus as the divisor becomes less and less, the quotient will become more and more. When the divisor is the least, that is infintesimal, approximating to zero, the quotient will be infinity.*

We multiply the quotient with the divisor and check up whether the resulting is equivalent to the dividend. In this division of any number by zero the number that is divided stands for the prapancha *(the pluralistic universe of infinite variety), the divisor zero stands for Maya (or the Creative Power of the Absolute which causes this pluralistic appearance) and the quotient Infinite, is the Absolute Brahman. For the purpose of creating the* prapancha, *which is the dividend, Brahman, which is the quotient, multiplies itself by Maya, which is the divisor. Even as* 1 *divided by zero, or* 2 *divided by zero, or* 3 *divided by zero, will give the same quotient, when the Infinite is multiplied by zero, it is indeterminate, and therefore, it can take the values,* 1, 2, 3 *etc., numbers connoting difference and therefore, standing for the plurality of the world. The Upanishad says that the One Absolute determined to become Many, and for that purpose, it associated itself with Maya, and became Many.*

When any number is multiplied by zero the product is also zero. That is the significance of the saying that the prapancha *which is the product of Brahman and Maya, is also Maya.*

The Divine Mother is the Creative Principle of the Universe, the Maya *or* Sakti *aspect of Brahman, which makes the Infinite One, appear as the Infinite Many. She presents the formless Supreme in finite forms. It is only by Her grace that one can transcend the Maya and obtain the advaitic realisation of the One without a second.*

*

There are ten main Upanishads and one of them is Kena *Upanishad. In this Upanishad a truth expounded by the Vedas is explained by means of a story. According to this story, the devas (celestial beings) once decided to celebrate their victory over the asuras (demons). At this festival, all the devas were filled with a feeling of self importance and pride in their own prowess. To cure them of their egoism, God appeared in the form of a Yaksham, a bright apparition which touched the earth below and the heavens above. The identity of this phenomeon, the devas were unable to comprehend. Agni* (Fire) *was sent to find what it was. To a question from the Yaksham, Agni said that he was Jatavedas, having the power to reduce anything and everything*

अन्नपूर्णे सदा पूर्णे शंकरप्राणवल्लभे ।
ज्ञानवैराग्यसिद्ध्यर्थं भिक्षां देहि च पार्वति ॥

Oh Mother Annapurna! Goddess who feeds the entire humanity! Goddess who is the Fulness of Infinity! Oh, Thou life-giving spouse of Siva! Give me the alms of not only the food for physical up-keep but also THAT *food which confers Enlightenment and Passionless-ness.*

While Sankara extols each of the divinities as one born and bred in that particular cult, there is no denying the fact that he is particularly overwhelmed with intense love when he sings of Sakti, the Divine Mother, when the flood-gates of poesy burst open.

Sakti, the Power of Brahman, is not merely Maya, which is responsible for this appearance of the world. She is also the One Who transports the yearning heart to the state transcending Maya.

In the *sloka* above from *Annapoornashtaka,* Sankara prays for being fed with the Ambrosia of illumination. We have the story current in Kerala that the Divine Mother actually blessed the child Sankara with her milk — which is the essence of enlightenment.

Among Sankara's hymns, a sizeable amount are addressed to the Mother Goddess, *Soundarya Lahari* standing foremost. One of the names in *Sankara Ashtottara* is *Soundaryalaharimukhya bahu stotra vidayakah.*

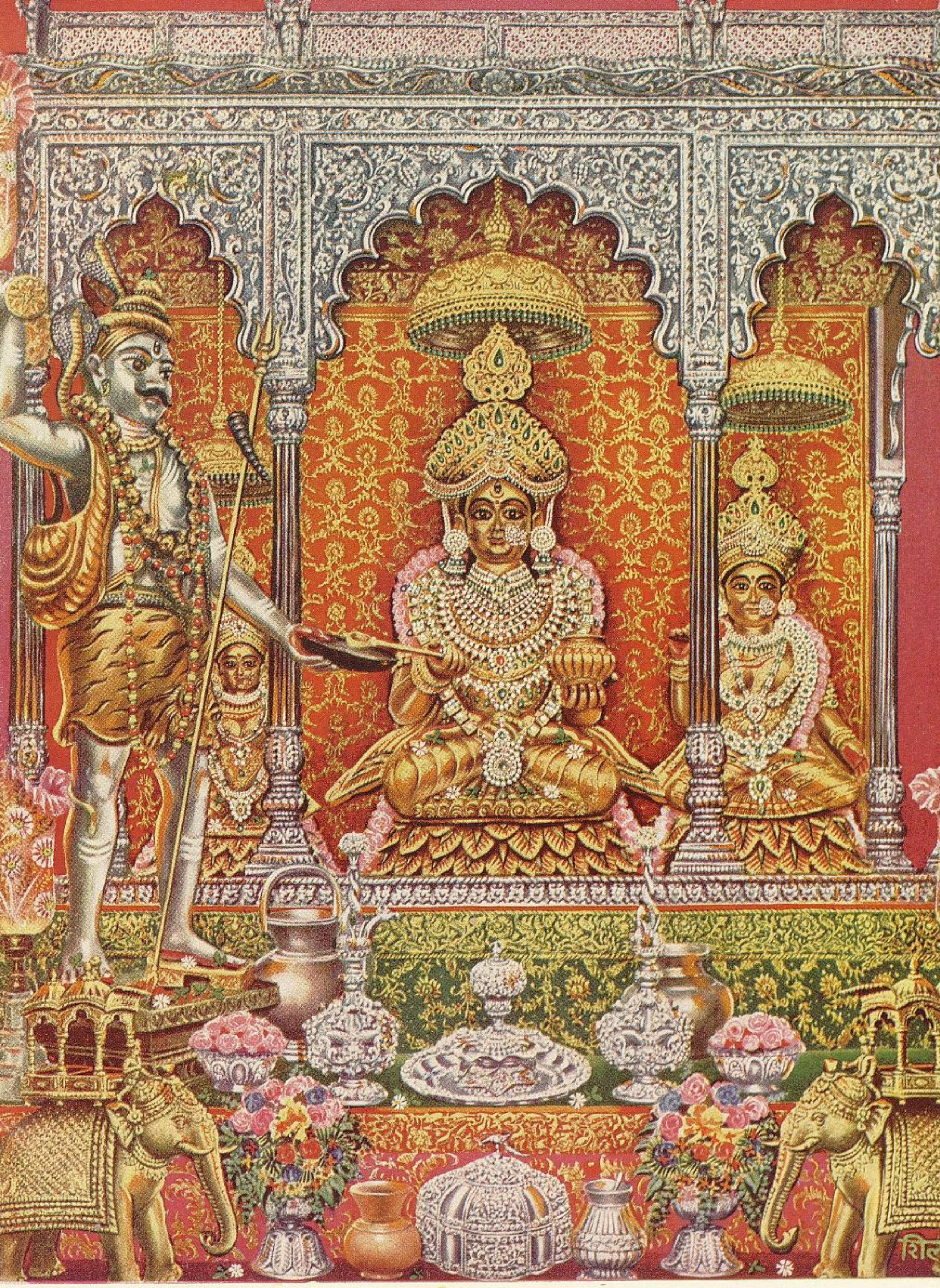
Some scholars are even of the opinion that Sankara was not an out-and-out *Smarta,* but one with a *Samaya* slant — i.e. he had particular leanings towards the *Samaya* form of worshipping Sakti. The code of worship of Sakti, *Sri Vidya,* owes much to Sankara.

In many of his *stotras* on the Divine Mother he offers mental worship with all the rich and uncloying exuberance and paraphernalia of a regal *puja.* He has also composed a stotra on Devi in which a foot from the Vedas forms the fourth foot of each stanza (*Tripurasundari Veda Padastava*). Numerous are the shrines which claim the installation of the Sri Chakra by Sankara.

Kamakoti is the very consummation of Sankara's ardent devotion to the Divine Mother. Emerging out of the Dakshinamurti of Eternal Peace, Sankara finally merged in the Eternal Grace called Kamakoti.

(*Picture* : Annapoorna of Kasi giving alms of food to Siva. Lakshmi is seated to her left)

Artist : 'SILPI'



to ashes. Thereupon the Yaksham threw in front of Agni a blade of grass and asked him to consume it. Even though Agni concentrated all his powers, he was unable to burn it. He came back humbled. Similarly Vaayu or Maatarisva, also failed to move the blade of grass, even though he concentrated all his fury to blow it off. Finally Indra, the Lord of the Devas, approached the Yaksham. The apparition vanished and before the crest-fallen Indra stood the form of a damsel whose lustre illuminated the entire place. She was no other than Uma or Haimavati, the Divine Mother, from whom every one and everything derive sustenance. This Jyoti-svaroopa *informed Indra that the Yaksham who was present a while back was no other than the Paramatma, the source of all energy and life, and that if the devas had succeeded in conquering the asuras, it was due to the grace of that Paramatma who infused the devas with their respective powers. Indra became enlightened and he communicated this knowledge to the other devas. This knowledge destroyed the demon of egoism from their hearts, which then became pure.*

Uma, the Divine Mother, is the personification of the Sound Manifestation of the Absolute which is called pranava, Aum. *She is brightness in light and fragrance in flowers. She has the illumination of a thousand suns and yet has the soothing coolness of a thousand moons. Along with Brahman, She is the Supreme Self or Paramatma-svaroopa sung by the Vedas. Let us surrender ourselves at the Mother's feet which the Vedas praise, get purified of heart, and attain lasting bliss.*

*

The Divine Mother is the soul of the varna *or alphabet. The Saastras (Scriptures) which are based on sabda* (sound) *are therefore forms of the Divine Mother or Paradevata. Sabda gives rise to forms, visible shapes. It is observed that when particular musical notes are played near a pond, the resultant vibrations induce particles of light dust, floating on the water, to arrange themselves into specific shapes. Thus* sabda *and* roopa *(sound and form) have close affinity. This also accounts for the sanctity of* mantras, *which are words and letters combined and arranged in specific forms. The repetition of a* mantra, *with devotion, earns for us the grace of the particular manifestation of God to whom that mantra is dedicated. The Divine Mother is the soul of all mantras.*

The conception of Divinity as Mother is unique and inspiring. In human relationship the affection of a mother for her child is unsurpassed. Similarly, the depth of the Divine Mother's love for her devotees is unfathomable. The grace that flows from Her is spontaneous and irresistible. That is why the *Divine Mother as Sri Annapoorna is depicted as carrying a vessel containing rice mixed with milk in one hand and a ladle in the other. She is ready to distribute this food to those who pray for it. In the abundance of Her mercy, She gives us not only food that sustains our body, but also* jnana *(knowledge) that nourishes the soul. When Sri Adi Sankara prayed to Mother Annapoorna to give him alms, he prayed not only for himself but for all mankind. We are all members of one family, being the children of the Divine Parents, Parvati and Paramesvara. It is our duty to love, help and serve one another.*

In this world, we, mortals, are so overwhelmed with ajnaana *(ignorance) that though we know a thing to be wrong, we are helplessly impelled to do it.* Ajnaana *is a disease for which* jnnana *(enlightenment) is the only cure. The Divine Mother alone is capable of bestowing this milk of* jnaana, *remove our ignorance, and satiate the hunger of our* atma *(soul). Like a hungry child we must yearn for the grace of the Divine Mother, so that we can obtain from Her the milk of enlightenment.*

If we think of Her, we will not only be avoiding doing wrong, but will also be fed by Her with the milk of jnaana. As a result, we will be endowed with the grace of Sarasvati, the Goddness of Learning, and of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. Not only that, physically we will be healthy and radiant with charm (tejas) *that flows from health. We will also be blessed with long life.*

Jnaana *will sever attachment* (paasa) *which binds the soul to this world. When the bond is severed, the liberated soul merges into the limitless and all-pervasive Bliss, and is no longer afflicted by fear, sorrow, or pain. Thus, the effect of worshipping the Divine Mother is the fulfilment of the purpose of life: the merger of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. This is the significance of the* phalasruti *for the 100 verses of Sankara's* Soundarya Lahari.

*

In Mooka Panchasati, *Sri Kamakshi Kamakoti, the Divine Mother is referred to as darkish blue in colour in the* Stuti Sataka, *and as saffron in colour in the* Arya

Sataka. Soundarya Lahari *describes Ambika's colour as* aruna, *splendrous red of the rising sun. Why is the colour of the same Goddess described as dark-blue in one place and red in another? According to* Mantra Sastras, *Kamesvara, who transcends the Trinity Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva is actionless and unattached. Sri Kamesvari, His consort who is the Supreme Parasakti, seated on the left of Sri Kamesvara, is described to be red in colour. The sameness of Parvati* (Consort of Siva), *who is dark, and Parasakti,* (The Power of the Absolute) *who is red, is indicated in* Mooka Panchasati *by attributing both these colours to the Supreme Goddess.*

Sri Kamesvara's form is like that of a pure colourless crystal which becomes invisible when immersed in water. He is thereby conceived as formless even though He has a form. Vishnu and Parvati, both dark-blue, are twin manifestations, as also Siva and Sarasvati, both white, and Brahma and Lakshmi, both golden yellow. Daylight is colourless, and yet it contains all the primary colours. If one of the colours is separated from the colourless light, the rest of the colours reveal themselves. Red is the least disturbing colour as is evident from the fact that red light is used to develop photographic negatives. It is called infra-red as opposed to ultra-violet. Under the influence of red Parasakti, the colourless Kamesvara manifests himself as Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and their respective consorts, Sarasvati, Lakshmi, and Parvati and starts the activities of the world process.

In Soundarya Lahari, *Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada says that these three Divinities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, started their cosmic process when the Supreme Sakti knitted Her brow for a fraction of a second. She stood beyond them all and Her red splendour stimulated them to perform their respective functions of creation, preservation and destruction, by Her very presence.*

The lesson to be drawn from the foregoing is that the same Supreme Being appears in diverse forms as we conceive. It is to shower Its grace in the manner we invoke it. We do it by mantra *and* japa *which are sound waves having the power to transform themselves into the forms whose* mantras *they are. If we continuously chant the* mantra *into which we are initiated, the Supreme Parasakti will shower Her grace on us by taking the form signified by that* mantra.

She is meditated in the moon which gives soothing light and also assuages heat. Thus She sheds her nectar rays all round. The Para Devata whom we worship and the Full Moon we see in the sky are related in this life. It behoves us to constantly meditate on any chosen mantra on an Ishta Devata (Divinity of our choice) so that our soul may be enveloped by that Devata, and our thoughts by that mantra even at the time when the soul departs from the body. That is the path shown to us by our sages.

In the Upanishad of the Sama Veda (the Kena), *the Supreme Goddess Kamakoti is described as the Daughter of the Himalayas. She is Uma shining with golden jewels; is of the form of the mystic syllable of Omkara, embodying its component syllables of A, U and M. She is the Supreme Spiritual Wisdom. When the Gods were beset with the pride of victory in battle, she appeared and gave them the teaching of freedom from false pride and egotism. We shall first pray to Her for ridding ourselves of the sense of complacent egotism.*

" What should be done in an emergency? The feet of our Mother Divine should be remembered" say those whose words we respect.

आपदि किं करणीयं? स्मरणीयं चरणयुगलमम्बायाः।

She is that Supreme Mother Goddess adored everywhere in our Bharatavarsha, as Tulaja Bhavani in Maharashtra, as Kshira Bhavani in Kashmir, as Jvalamukhi in the Punjab, as Ambaji in Gujarat, as Vindhyavarsini in Uttara Pradesh, as Kali in Bengal, as Kamkhya in Assam, as Chamundi in Karnataka, as Kamakshi in Kanchi and as Kanya Kumari in the Southern end of the country. Adored thus in hundreds of forms at different centre in the land She is ever vigilant protecting us, as Her own beloved children.

Among the many marks of those who have been blessed by the Goddess, is the mark of friendliness even to those who have evil designs on us, as also the mark of brotherly attitude towards all women. It is said in Muka's hymn to Goddess Kamakshi— " Those who have been blessed by the glance of the Goddess, take even the forest as a mansion, foe as friend and the lip of woman a clod of earth":

शिव शिव पश्यन्ति समं
श्रीकामाक्षी कटाक्षिताः पुरुषाः ।
विपिनं भवनममित्रं मित्रं लोष्टं
च युवतिबिम्बोष्ठम् ॥

The Divine Mother Sri Kamakshi is depicted as holding the bow and the arrow. Kamadeva the God of Love also bears them. But Sri Kamakshi is controlling Kama or lust with Her glance. Hence Kamakshi. She holds the sweet sugarcane bow representing the minds of human beings, and the five floral arrows representing the five senses through which the mind is influenced and is functioning.

If we surrender ourselves at the feet of the Divine Mother She will help us to keep the mind and the senses under control and purify onr heart, so that we may attain perfection.

Ambika, the Mother Divine , is all important to me. I consider Religion to be nothing but meditation upon Her lotus feet. In the presence of our human mother lust is quelled. Meditation upon the Divine Mother quells all evil propensities. It purifies us to Perfection. Let us dedicate everyone of our thoughts, words and actions to Her .

—H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI

SAKTI WORSHIP

By

ANNA N. SUBRAMANIAN

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling Nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy, by one or more or all of these and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or Dogmas or Rituals or Books or Temples or Forms are but secondary details.

—*Swami Vivekananda.*

The ultimate reality is Sat-Chit-Ananda, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Man is identical with this reality but under the influence of Maya or illusion, he has forgotten his true nature. He takes to be real a merely apparent world of subject and object and this error is the cause of his bondage and suffering. The goal of all Darsanas or ways of realization is the rediscovery of one's true nature. For the achievement of this goal, Vedanta or Brahma Vidya prescribes an austere method of discrimination and renunciation. The way is 'Neti, Neti', (Not this, Not this)—to negate the unreal accretions. If these are eliminated through service to a Guru (Teacher) and proper enquiry under his guidance, one realises the identity of the Jivatman (Individual Soul) and the Paramatman (Supreme Soul). But this is not so easily done. Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, which is the New Testament of Hinduism, "The difficulty of those whose thoughts are set on the unmanifested is great, for the unmanifested Brahman (Godhead) is hard to reach by embodied beings who are attached to their bodies." Hence arises the need for formal worship for the great majority of men and women. The different Darsanas come in here to help them, prescribing the rituals for the worship of the chosen Deity and explaining their significance. The Darsanas, though various, are inter-related and point but to one goal. We shall see how the Sakta Darsana or the cult of Sakti worship fulfils this purpose.

Shakti literally means Power. Shakti is the Power of Brahman. Theistically Shakti is the Divine Mother.

Whereas the Vedantic method of enquiry is one of rejection and elimination, the Shakta method is one of acceptance and sublimation. Shakti worship is a means of elevation of the consciousness, using all available materials for help, following the lead of those who have experimented before and succeeded. The very poison that kills is transmuted into the elixir of life.

In the process of worship, the order in which the elements of existence are evolved are reversed. From the gross, one proceeds to the subtle, as for example in the Worship of the Divine Mother in the mystical diagram known as Sri Chakra. By this practice, one is enabled to awaken the Kundalini or the primal source of energy lying coiled in the Muladhara (Solar plexus) at the base of the spinal column. Kundalini is a universal principle. Having evolved the complex apparatus of every object, Kundalini coils herself up at the centre of the apparatus and remains as the static, nuclear basis and also as its magazine of power to draw and fall back upon. One must help oneself by drawing from this power to become free from the bonds under which one groans. Even if one does not consciously or deliberately set oneself to the task of rousing the Kundalini she will be roused by the power of the disciplines one practises, if one follows them with faith. The awakening of the Kundalini is the beginning of spiritual consciousness and its union with the Supreme Spirit in the mystical thousand-petalled lotus in the head is the Consummation of Shakti worship.

II

There is a vast literature relating to Sakti worship beginning from the Vedas themselves. In Sandhya or the daily Twilight Worship we meditate on Gayatri Devi who not only gives light and life to the Sun but also kindles the light of wisdom in our mind. Her praise is sung thus: "To those who adore thee, O Mother, thou grantest all boons. Thou art the origin of the Vedas and all the worlds. Be pleased to shine in my heart and accept my adoration. Thou art intelligence, thou art the power of endurance, thou art strength, thou art effulgence. Thou art the power of the gods and thou art in everything and beyond everything. Bathe me in thy glory and purify me."

In the Mahabharata which is called the fifth Veda, there is reference to Sakti worship in many contexts. Before entering the Matsya Kingdom for spending the last year of exile *in cognito* Dharmaputra prays to Durga. At the commencement of the battle of Kurukshetra, Sri Krishna asks Arjuna to climb down from the chariot and to pray to Durga and Arjuna does so. In most of the Puranas the importance of Sakti worship is alluded to. In the Srimad Bhagavata, we see Rukmini worshipping at the shrine of Ambika, before her marriage. Then we have the vast literature consisting of what are known as Aagamas and Tantras and their numerous commentaries which codify the Sakta practice and theory. Referring to the Shakta Tantras, the *Soundaryalahari* says that after Siva had filled the world with other Tantras, he gave out at the request of Sakti the Sri Tantra which fulfils the objects covered by all the other Tantras and this is known as the worship of Sripura or Sri Vidya.

We are told that Dattatreya, seeing that Sri Vidya is considered the highest of all forms of worship and that its effects included the benefits of the other modes, composed a Samhita of 18,000 verses in which the worship of God as Mother is laid down in all its details. From him, Parasurama learnt the Samhita and abridged it in 6,000 *sutras*. Most of the Sakti worshippers in South India follow the lines laid therein. Bhaskararaya who lived on the banks of the Cauvery from 1690 to 1785 has expounded the methods and philosophy of Sakti worship in his classical books. The worship of Sakti in Sri Chakra is set forth by Adi Sankara in the *Soundaryalahari* and the *Prapanchasara* and this form of worship occupies a high place in the traditions of the Maths organized by him. In Tamil, we have expositions of Sakti Mantras in 'Tirumanthiram' of Tirumoola Nayanar. The works of Arthur Avalon in English have thrown a flood of light on the whole range of Sakta literature and removed many misconceptions which prevailed previously. The writings of Sri Aurobindo and his followers have also contributed to a better understanding of the subject. The Guhananda Mandali in Madras under the guidance of Chidanandanatha Sri N. Subramania Aiyar has done pioneering work in recent years in removing the cobwebs that had gathered round the Shakta cult and in popularising it in its pure form.

III

While in general the northern modes of worship emphasize strength and passion and are revolutionary, the southern modes emphasize beauty and grace and are evolutionary, cautious and slow. The two are not contradictory, but complementary. In the southern cult of Sri Vidya, the Divine mother is mostly worshipped in her aspect as Lalita Maha Tripura Sundari. Speaking of her, Sri Sankaracharya says in *Soundaryalahari*: "The knowers of Veda call you Vak-Devata or the consort of Brahma, Lakshmi or the consort of Vishnu, Parvati or the consort of Siva, but you are indescribable and beyond them, possessing immeasurable glory, revolving the worlds and you are therefore called Mahamaya." She is to be meditated upon as of a ruddy complexion, with eyes expansive as an ocean overflowing with waves of grace, with a noose, a goad, arrows of flowers and a bow of sugarcane in Her hands, surrounded by Anima and other deities and ultimately as one's own Self. The worship is done in the image of the Devi as well as in the Sri Chakra.

Mantra, Yantra and Tantra form the three corners of the triangle of Sri Vidya. Mantra is a formula sacred to a deity and ultimately the deity itself. By repeating the Mantra, the seeker grasps Godhead through sound. This Mantra is visualised in the Yantra which is a mystical diagram. The worship of the Yantra, internal and external, and the practice of Kundalini Yoga and other disciplines constitute the Tantra or *modus operandi*. The Chief Mantra of Sri Vidya is Panchadasakshari and the Chief Tantra is meditation on the identity of Mantra, Yantra and Tantra with the Divine Mother herself. If worship is done with appreciation of its significance and with love in the heart, then the procedure and paraphernalia of worship are all transformed into forms and expressions of Sakti. The object is to effect the transformation of the materials and acts of ordinary experience into forms revealing the play, the power and bliss of the Divine Mother. If the worshipper practises self-surrender, whatever action is naturally done by him is transformed into worship.

The worshipper should follow certain disciplines. He should not find fault with other paths or criticize them while being steadfast in his own. The practice of *japam* (repetition of Mantra) should go on as an undercurrent at all times. He should not ask for favours or accept them. He should do his duties in the world as well as the worship of the deity without attachment to fruit. He should be fearless. He should not acquire wealth and possessions with the motive of selfish enjoyment. He should consider nothing higher than the realization of the Self.

The Sakta Darsana—Cult of Sakti has room in it for the personal as well as impersonal aspects of Godhead. It effects a reconciliation of the paths of work, love and reason. It is in agreement with the findings of science. While the followers of different system quarrel among themselves, the Sakta has no quarrel with any of them. An adept in Sri Vidya can be a Shakta at heart, a Saivite in outlook and a Vaishnavite in practice. That such a reconciliation is not only possible but necessary was revealed to us in recent times in the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. He has proved that all paths pursued with devotion lead to the same goal, that Mantras are efficacious, that Yantras are potent, that Devatas and higher powers do exist, and that step by step the Divine Mother leads the seeker to higher and higher levels of consciousness till he reaches perfection and becomes one with the Supreme Reality.

Shakta Darsana is thus a synthesis and harmony in which diverse, and sometimes conflicting, tendencies of human endeavour have been accommodated and each in union with the rest has been assured its fullest development and satisfaction.

DIFFERENT MANIFESTATIONS OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

By

C. V. SVAMI SASTRIGAL

सृष्ट्वा शक्तिमहो शिवः परशिवा सृष्ट्वा शिवं तावजौ दांपत्यं समवाप्य विश्वजनकौ भूत्वा तयोः क्रीडतोः ।
शक्तिस्सा हि कुमारिका परशिवो देवो व्रती सर्वदा वृत्तस्यास्य रहस्यमद्भुततमस्याद्या विजानन्ति हि ॥

Sivam (Matter) created Sakti (Energy). Sakti created Sivam. Neither of these has a birth. This Sivam and Sakti became husband and wife. They brought forth an infant called the universe. They were playing with it. Of these Sakti is certainly a virgin. Sivam is a bachelor for ever. The ancient sages Sanaka and others know the secret of this mystery.

The *Sutasamhita* says : *Sarvam vyaktam Umarupam.* (All that is manifest are the forms of Uma or Sakti). The *Saptasati* says : *Vidyassamastastava devi bhedah : Striyassamastassakalajagatsu.* [All the Vidyas (Knowledges) and women seen in this world are, O Devi, Thy manifestations]. So all perceived things are Devi's different forms. The Bhagavatpada sang in the *Soundaryalahari*: *Manastvam Vyomastvam marudasi marutsaratirasi tvamapah : tvambhumih tvayiparinatayam nahi param*—"Worshipful mother! The mind, the sky, the wind, the fire, the water and the earth are all Thy transformations. There is naught beyond thee." This view of the transformation of the Divine Mother into the elements of the universe is a feature of Tantrik philosophy. In fact, everything is imagined in the Supreme Sakti which is of the nature of Sat (Reality), Chit (Knowledge) and Ananda (Joy).

The sweets made of sugar, flour and ghee appear different in name and form. But they are all constituted of the same substances. The different names and forms are all attributions of our mind. So, too, are names and forms imagined in the *Brahma Sakti* (Power of the Absolute).

The same Sakti is conceived in the different forms of Bala, Lalitamba, Raja Rajesvari, Bhuvanesvari, Chandi, Durga, etc., and worshipped as such. When Devi is consecrated in the Sri Vidya Puja, She is medidated upon with the words : *Sri Lalitayah amrta chaitanya murtim kalpayami*: "I medidate in this image the form of Sri Lalitamba which is compacted of nectar and supreme intelligence."

When put into the mouth sweet things made of sugar, flour and ghee are reduced to a formless mass and we taste the sweetness only. So too when we meditate in our heart on the Devi's various forms of worship imagined on the Brahma Sakti of what is Sat, Chit and Ananda, we shall not see the distinctions of form, but experience only the pure integral bliss. But God has to be worshipped with names and forms till this bliss becomes a felt experience. Among the divine forms imagined in what is ultimately Sat, Chit and Ananda, there is no grada-

tion of high or low. This difference of level is also a product of our imagination.

Yet, in the *Bahvrchopanishad*, speaking of certain divinities, it is said that Lalita alone is truly the One without a second: *Satyam ekam Lalitakyam vastuh tad adviteeyam.*

Again we have:

Lakshyatvat sarva vidyanam
lingahinatya sthiteh
tarakatvat bhavambodheh
Laliteti prakirtyate

As She is the object of all *vidyas*, as She is without differentiation of male or female, as She lifts Her devotees across the ocean of Samsara, She is known as Lalita. Thus has the word Lalita been explained.

Moreover it is said :

strirupam chintayet Devim
pum rupam va vinchintayet
athava nishkalam dhyayet
sacchidananda lakshanam

Sri Sakti may be meditated on as a male or as a female, or as sexless *sacchidananda*. The glories of Devi are expatiated on in the Sakti Puja chapter of the *Sutasamhita*.

Now we shall speak about the form of Sakti in the aspect of Lalita, and Her different manifestations as Bala, Rajesvari, Bhuvanesvari, Chandi, Durga, Rajamatangi and Varahi and also consider Her angadevatas (ancillary deities). We shall first take up Her form as Bala, also spoken of as Kumari.

BALA

Dhyanam or Meditation: May that Bala who radiates rays of red in all Her directions, who holds in Her hands the akshamala (beads), a book, the assurance of freedom from fear and the sign of bestowing boons who is sitting on a purple water-lily in full-bloom and who is ever auspicious, may She reside in my heart.

The Tantras explain the fourteen different manifestation of this Bala. Yet, knowledgeable persons have mainly worshipped only such forms whose *mulamantras* (sacred formulae) are of either three or six letters. The very name Bala indicates the number of the letters comprising the *mantra*. According to the numerology *Katapaya*, *ba* stands for 3 and *la* for 3 making 6 together.

Bala is the beginning stage of Brahmagnana or Self-knowledge. It is the practice among some persons to initiate their sons into the three letters of the *mulamantra* of Bala in addition to initiating them into the three letters of the *pranava*. This is known as the *vandana mantra*. Only when thus taught, does the boy initiated into Gayatri become fit to be called a Brahmachari. The Tantras declare that this Bala is ever ten years young.

LALITAMBA.

Meditation : I meditate on Lalita Devi who is sitting on the lap of Kamesvara who is ever sixteen, in an abode constructed out of the precious stones of Chintamani, on a cot whose legs are Brahma (Creator), Vishnu, (Protector), Rudra (Destroyer) and Isvara (who is responsible for the great illusion of worldly life); Lalita bearing the noose, the goad, arrows of flowers and the bow of sugarcane in Her four hands—Lalita who is of a bright red complexion, who wears the moon's digit on Her forehead and who is ever sixteen years of age.

The *mulamantra* of this Devi has fifteen letters. It is threefold as *Kadi Vidya*, *Hadi Vidya* and *Sadi Vidya*. Based on the differences of worshippers this fifteen-lettered *mula mantra* has twelve variations. The theories of worship are divided into three classes as *Anandabhairavamata*, *Hayagrivamata* and *Dakshinamurtimata.*

The Devi who is indicated by the sixteen lettered *mula mantra* is called *Shodasi* and the eighteen lettered form is that of *Saubhagyavidya*. The number of letters in these *mulamantras* are also denoted by the very names of Sakti in *Katapaya* calculation :

La - 3 ; li - 3 ; tham - 6 ; ba - 3 (total 15)

La - 3 ; li - 3 ; tham - 6 ; bi - 3 ka - 1 (total 16)

Sri - 2 ; la - 3 ; li - 3 ; tham - 6 ; bi - 3 ; ka - 1 (total 18)

These differences are only those of condition and not of essential nature.

Lalita is the Presiding Deity over the period of the aspirant's actual realization of Self-knowledge.

SRI RAJA RAJESVARI.

Dhyanam is as given before.

Raja Rajesvari is also called *Mahashodasi*. Sri Vidya is the common scripture of all these forms. Raja Rajesvari indicates the state of fullness of *Jnana* (knowledge). Her *mantra* is called *Mahashodasi* - it has 28 letters. The number of letters of the *mantra* is calculated on the name Sri Raja Rajesvari as under :

Sri - 2 ; Ra - 2 ; ja - 8 ; ra - 2 ; je - 8 ; sva - 4 ri - 2 ; (total 28)

Mahashodasi is said to be 60 years of age, as She is full of Jnana. The great festival of Vasanta Navaratri coming off in the Chaitra month is said to be specially sacred to Her.

Lalitamba who is said to be Sri Vidya is said to have three divinities called anga (Part), Upanga, (Ancillary Part) and Pratyanga (Reflex Part). They are called respectively *Navaksharibala*, *Annapurna* and *Asvarudha.*

NAVAKSHARIBALA

Meditation is the same as for Bala.

ANNAPURNA

Meditation : I worship the Devi who has a golden ladle in Her right hand, who holds in Her left hand a vessel of precious stones containing rice cooked in milk, who doles out food to Her devotees,whose body is resplendant gold and who is decked with golden jewels and garlands.

ASVARUDHA

Meditation : She is to be meditated as red coloured, riding a red coloured steed, as adorned in red cloths and red-jewellery, as having four hands, three eyes, and a beaming countenance. She has in one of Her hands the weapon *pallam*, another hand showing the open palm in the *Charpata mudra*, the third hand holding a golden noose binding the necks of her enemies, while the golden cane in the fourth strikes terror in their minds. With palms clasped and uplifted one should fall in her feet as a humble devotee and meditate on Her.

Lalita Devi is the Empress of all the worlds. Her minister is known as *Rajamatangi*, *Mantrini* etc.

RAJAMATANGI

Meditation : I meditate on Rajamatangi decked with precious jewels, who is in ecstasy over potations of *madhu*, whose locks are adorned with Kadamba flowers, who carries a Vina on her lap and plays on it exquisitely, wears an apparel of red colour, is adorned on her forehead with the Kastnri, who has crescent for head-wear, who wears on her earlobes conch-like ornaments, who fulfils the wishes of her devotees by Her sweet smile, whose bodily lustre resembles that of the parrot and who holds a parrot symbolic of all arts.

Rajamatangi is the intellectual and artistic power of Rajarajesvari, whose minister She is. Minakshi is usually identified with Rajamatangi. Madurai is said to be Her especial seat—Pitha of Raja Matangi, just as Kanchi is celebrated as the especial seat of Lalita (Kamakshi or Kamakoti)

The Navaratri for this Devi comes off in the month of Magha. The *angadevata* of this Mantrini Devi is Laghushyama and the *Upangadevata* is Vagvadini and the *Pratyanga devata* is Nakuli.

LAGHUSHYAMA

Meditation : I meditate on the Matanga kanya, daughter of the sage Matanga who plays on a Veena made of ruby, who is inebriated with wine, who is exquisitely beautiful and whose bodily lustre is like that of the Indranila (sapphire) stone.

VAGVADINI

Meditation : May that Bharati protect us who is sitting on a white lotus, who has a writing instrument and a book in her two hands, whose body is lustrous white, whose coronet is decked with the face of the moon and who dispels all fears of *samsara* (worldly life).

NAKULI

Meditation : One should meditate on Nakuli Devi whose teeth dazzle like diamond, who bites off the serpent of the tongues of Her foes and who assures succour to Her devotees.

VARAHI

She is the commander-in-chief of the Empress Lalita. She is also known as *Dandini*. Akhilandesvari of Jambukesvaram is identified with *Dandini*. ‘ Varahi ’ means ‘ the boar-faced ’.

Meditation : I contemplate on Varahi who is sitting on a lotus, whose body is of the hue of moisture-laden clouds, who has three eyes of red colour, who is full-bosomed, who fulfils the wishes of those who approach Her, who has in Her eight hands, the disc, the sword, the pestle, the sign of succour, the conch, the shield, the plough, and the sign of conferring boon.

This Varahi is the ego of Lalitamba. Her Navaratri comes off in the month of Ashada. Her *angadevata* is *Laghuvarahi*, *Upangadevata* is *Svapnavarahi* and *Pratyanga devata* is *Tiraskarini.*

LAGHUVARAHI

Meditation : I bow to Laghuvarahi who lifted up the earth from the sea, who has big canine teeth and who has a very huge body.

SVAPANAVARAHI

Meditation : I bow to Svapanavarahi who declares the good and evil that will happen to Her devotees, in their dreams, and who wards off evil dreams.

TIRASKARINI

Meditation : I bow to Tiraskarini Devi whose hair is dishevelled, whose garments are the directions, who is adorned with all kinds of ornaments and who entices people in worldliness by physically drawing attention to her creative power.

PARA

Para is Lalita's heart.

Meditation : May the Para Devi protect us, the lustre of whose body is like the full moon, who has three eyes, who wears the crescent on Her forehead and who bears on Her hand the book and the Chinmudra (sign of Wisdom).

*

In the Devi Upanishad it is said that one should first take to Panchadasi Mantra, 15 syllabled *mantra* of Rajarajesvari, attain perfection in it and then take to the *mantras* of Bhuvanesvari and Chandi.

Bhuvanesvari is celebrated highly in the Devi Bhagavata.

BHUVANESVARI

Meditation : I bow to Bhuvanesvari whose bodily lustre is like that of the rising sun, who bears the mark of the moon on Her head, who has three eyes, who wears golden ornaments on Her ears, who is seated on a lotus flower, who is profusely bejewelled, who has four hands holding the noose, the goad, and the signs of fearlessness and fruition.

In this mantra there are many variations. Bhuvanesvari is the presiding deity of Sakta worship. She is none other than Sri Vidya Panchadasakshari previously referred to. and Brahmavidya (Self-Knowledge.) Those who meditate on the single lettered mantra of Bhuvanesvari will be filled with transcendental bliss and will become Omniscient.

CHANDI

Meditation : I worship Chandi, whose bodily lustre is like that of lightning, who is riding a lion, who has a fierce aspect, who carries a wonderful sword and a shield, who is surrounded by nine maidens, and who bears on her eight hands the discus, the mace, the sword, the shield, the arrow, the bow, the rope, and the *tarjani* sign of censure ; who is flaming like fire, who bears the mark of the moon and has three eyes.

The *mula mantra* of this Chandi is nine-lettered. The word Chandi also signifies the number of letters in the *mula mantra* (Chan-6 ; di- 3).

If the letters are reversed and placed side by side we get 36 which indicates the 36 principles (tattvas).

Chandi, the presiding Deity of the nine-lettered mantra is the giver of supreme bliss. She permeates the world as the supreme Truth. Chandi is generally spoken of as Durga.

DURGA

There are many varieties in Durga. The mantras too are different. She is the police force to Devi Parasakti (the Supreme Power). When prayed to and taken refuge in during times of danger of whatever kind, She will ward them off completely. ' Durgam ' means a moat. The moat will prevent the enemies from approaching a fort. So too, She protects from all dangers those who take refuge in her. In days of yore, kings used to erect round their forts enclosures of water, hills and forests etc., to keep the enemies away; and naturally Durga was pre-eminently the Goddess of kings and warriors.

The Navaratri for this Durga comes off in the month of Asvayuja, and is celebrated with eclat all over the land.

She is said to be compacted of Gauri (Power) Lakshmi (Wealth) and Sarasvati (Wisdom). Calculating by Katapayadi numerology, Her name will add up to 38, made up of *Agnikala* 10, *Surya Kala* 12 and *Somakala* 16. In times of danger, if one worships Her peaceful aspect (Santi Durga) of 12 syllables with Vrikshi flowers dipped in honey, either adding a Rik of *Durga sukta* before and after, or separately, all dangers will vanish. This has been a matter of experience for many.

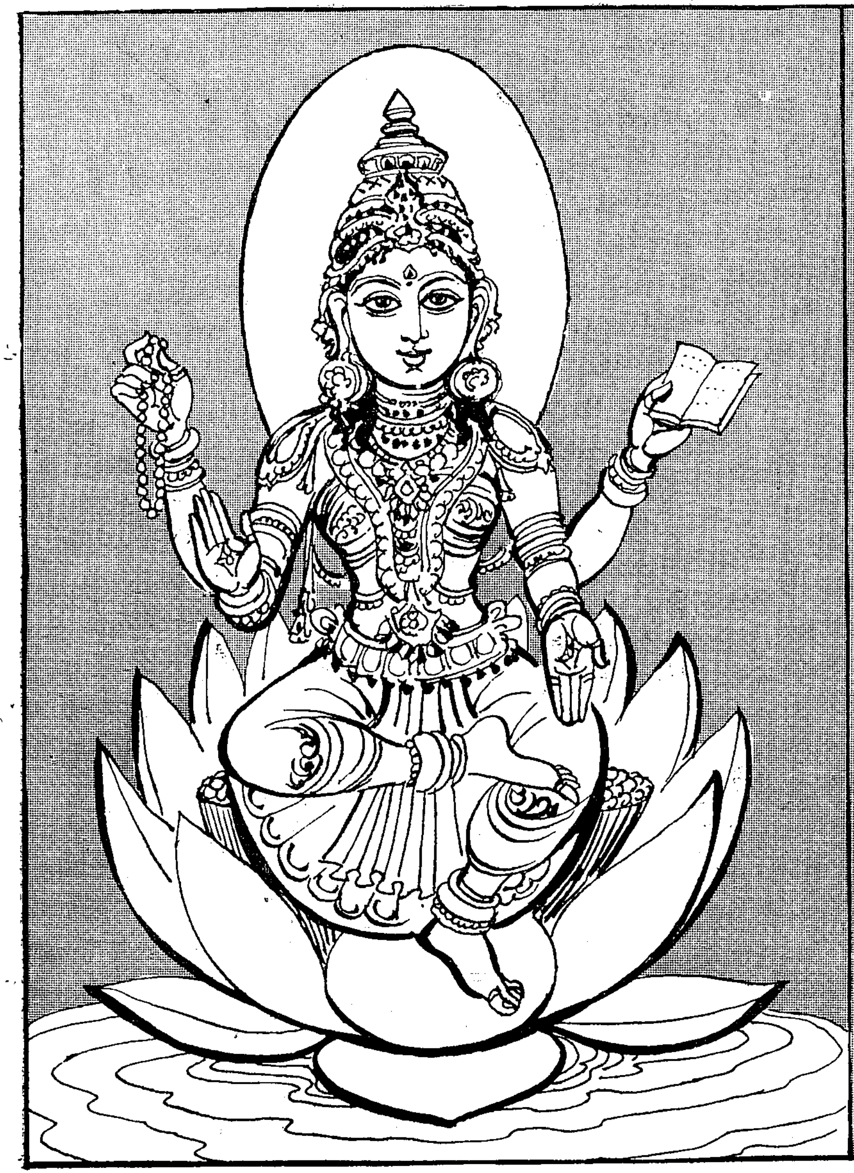
Durga, who is of many forms, is ordinarily conceived as under :

Meditation : I bow to Durga with four hands carrying a conch, a discus, an arrow and a bow, who has three eyes, who wears a crown bejewelled with the crescent, who ri es a lion, who is adored by celestial beings, who is green in colour like tender grass and who destroys loadful of sins.

This world is like a moat preventing access to Lalitamba who is of the nature of Sat, Chit and Ananda. Let us pray that with the Grace of Durga we cross it over and experience the supreme bliss of Sat, Chit and Ananda.

जानामि धर्मं न च मे प्रवृत्तिः
जानाम्यधर्मं न च मे निवृत्तिः ।
त्वया हृषीकेशि हृदि स्थितेन
यथा नियुक्तोऽस्मि तथा करोमि ॥

I know what should be done, but my mind is not inclined that way. I know what should not be done, but my mind does not withdraw from it. You, Hrshikesi, who quells the lure of the senses, you are enthroned in my heart. I shall do as enjoined by you.



Bala

Lalita (Kamakoti—Kamakshi)

Annapurna

Asvaruda

Rajamatangi

Vagvadini

Varahi

Para

Bhuvanesvari

Chandi

THE DEVI STOTRAS OF SRI SANKARACHARYA

By

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In the beautiful and instructive tale with which the *Kena Upanishad* reinforces the need for humility, especially in those in high places, it is Uma Haimavati who enlightens Indra as to who the mysterious 'Yaksha' was who had made the chiefs of the gods realise their impotence. "It was the Brahman", She said, "and the victory over the *asuras* on which you gods preened yourselves was His victory." Commenting on the text *Satasminneva aakaase striyam aajagaama bahu sobhamaanaam Umaam Haimavateem,* (स तस्मिन्नेव आकाशे स्त्रियं आजगाम बहुशोभमानां उमां हैमवतीम्) Sri Sankara observes that because Indra, unlike Agni and Vayu, had not gone away but remained there and was meditating on that Unknown Who had eluded his vigilance, 'Vidyaa' was pleased with his devotion and appeared before him to enlighten him. "It is quite appropriate" says the Acharya "that she should be described as supremely lovely: 'like one bedecked with gold', for this saving Knowledge (Brahma-vidyaa) is the fairest of fair things." Having said this, the Acharya, the bed-rock of whose faith is the Veda, offers the alternative explanation that the Upanishad might also mean that it was Uma, the daughter of Himavan, Who showed Herself to Indra, and that the latter approached Her for enlightenment from the conviction that She, "the inseparable companion of the omniscient Isvara, should of a certainty know" who the Great Unknown was. Thus he equates Uma with Brahma-vidyaa. The view that Brahma-vidyaa is not different from the Brahman Itself is implicit in his extended (Vaakya) commentary on the same Upanishad, where he elucidates the words *tasminneva aakaas* as meaning "on the very spot in the sky (space) in which the Brahman had appeared and disappeared." This emphasis, taken together with his observation that the Brahman had vanished from view not merely to humble Indra but also from the desire to bless the chastened ruler of the gods, seems intended to suggest that the Brahman Itself appeared before him again, this time as Brahma-vidyaa, 'Chidroopinee', "in order to awaken him to the truth" (*abhipraaya-udbodha-hetutvaat*) (अभिप्राय-उद्बोध-हेतुत्वात्). And the *aakaasa* where the Brahman and later Uma appeared may well have been the *hrdaakaasa* (the space in the heart) where the *yogis* contemplate on the Lord, as Indra did.

Anandagiri in his gloss says that 'Vidyaa' referred to here is *satva-pradhaanaa saktih chit-taadaatmyaapattyaa bodha-hetuh* (सत्वप्रधानशक्तिः चित्-तादात्म्यापत्त्या बोधहेतुः) Satva is a quality of Maayaa, the inscrutable Power (Energy) of the Brahman, which comes into play in the world process. While *Vidyaa* in this sense, leads to the Brahman by removing *avidyaa*, both are negated when the identity of the Self with the Brahman is realised; hence the saying that "having prised out the thorn of ignorance with the thorn of knowledge, one throws both into the fire."

These preliminary observations seemed desirable because of the general scepticism with which the world of modern scholarship views the attribution to Sri Sankara of the authorship of a large number of devotional poems. While a few of these may have been the work of later writers, possibly of one or other of his successors on the great monastic foundations he established, there is no justification for questioning the authenticity of such poems as the *Soundarya Lahari* or the *Bhaja Govindam* for instance. These have been known and loved for centuries as the inspired outpourings of the great Acharya; and some of them (notably the *Soundarya Lahari*) are among the basic texts of important cults. The authority of this oral tradition is reinforced by the fact that neither in the philosophical ideas that they present nor in the warmth of emotion with which they are suffused, will the careful reader of the *Bhashyas* of Sri Sankara on the Upanishads and the Brahma-sutras find anything that could strike him as odd or incongruous. His advocacy of *Saguna upasaanaa* as the gateway to liberation, his unquestioning faith in all that the Veda says, as for example about the hierarchy of gods, their functions as helpers of mankind, and so on, his acceptance of the doctrines of other *darsanas* which are not contradicted by the Veda, and the glowing love of humanity that one senses behind the austere intellectual in every one of his well-known major works, are all reflected in these poems. They exhibit, too, the same catholicity of outlook and incandescent piety, along with a feeling for intellectual beauty which has rarely found expression in European literature after Plato and Dante.

Keeping these facts in mind we may turn to a consideration of Sri Sankara's hymns devoted to the glorification of the Great Mother, Uma Haimavati, the Consort of Isvara, the Lord Who is supreme over the Trimurtis, Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra.[1] These latter are responsible for the creation, the preservation and the destruction of the worlds respectively. They have their consorts, Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Parvati. But Isvara is the Brahman Itself in Its Saguna aspect, which comes into play when He manifests the phenomenal universe, employing His unique power of Maayaa and acting as both the efficient and the material cause of creation. There are more than a score of these poems which are traditionally regarded as the Bhagavatpada's work. The *Soundarya Lahari* is by common consent the most important of these. It is a favourite of His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swamigal, the present Jagadguru of the Kanchi Sri Sankaracharya Pitha, who has often discoursed on it with profound insight and moving eloquence. This hymn is, along with the *Lalitaa-Sahasranaamaa* the chief authority for the cult of Paraasakti in its *Samaya* form.

The *Samaya* doctrine, according to Bhaskararaya, the great Saakta commentator on the *Lalitaa-Sahasranaama*, is not at variance with Advaita in its basic tenets. But the special importance of the *Soundarya Lahari* lies in its reflecting as in a mirror the many-sidedness, as well as the ineluctable residuum of mystery at the heart of the Principle which the great Acharya strikingly describes as *'Para-Brahma-mahishi'* (Queen and Consort of the Supreme Brahman) in the *Soundarya Lahari*, and again in a shorter poem, the *Ananda Lahari*. Some literalists have felt scandalised at what seemed to them anthropomorphism with a vengeance and contended that the great apostle of Advaita could never have been guilty of such a solecism. But let us examine the word in its context. Verse 97 may be rendered as follows:

> "Those who are well-versed in the Aagamas speak of Thee variously as the Consort of Brahmaa, the Goddess of Speech, as Lakshmi, the Consort of Hari, and as the Daughter of the Mountain, Hara's Spouse. But Thou Queen of the Supreme Brahman, art really the transcendant Fourth that baffles the understanding, the Great Deluder of limitless glory that keeps the worlds in thrall."[2]

1. This is according to Saivite theology. The Vaishnavites look upon Narayana (Vishnu) as the Supreme.

2. गिरामाहुर्देवीं द्रुहिणगृहिणीमागमविदो
हरेः पत्नीं पद्मां हरसहचरीमद्रितनयाम् ।
तुरीया कापि त्वं दुरधिगमनिःसीममहिमा
महामाया विश्वं भ्रमयसि परब्रह्ममहिषि ॥

The word *Turiyaa,* so strikingly reminiscent of the '*Chaturtham*' of the Mandukya Upanishad, which is the Atman, the Eternal Witness of the three states, is as Kaivalyaasrama points out, none other than the *Chit-sakti* inseparable from the Brahman and so spoken of metaphorically as *Para-Brahma-mahishi.*

The *Soundarya Lahari* falls into two Parts. The first comprising forty-one verses, and known as '*Ananda Lahari*' or 'Waves of Bliss' (different from the shorter poem of the same name) is regarded not as a human composition but as revealed by the Lord Siva Himself to the Bhagavatpada. The special sanctity attached to it is obviously due to the transcendental truths of the Mantra Sastra, and in particular the principles and methods of Kundalini-yoga, with which it deals. But here, as in the Second Part, the emphasis is on the descent of Grace, and self-surrender as the surest means of obtaining it. How ready the Mother is to meet the loving devotee more than half-way is picturesquely expressed in a verse that is not easily translated, because the point is made by a double entendre exploiting a grammatical form. 'Bhavaani' is one of the names of the Devi, and it is also the form of the first person singular, imperative mood, of the verb *bhuu* (to be or become).

> "Hardly has the man said the words 'O Bhavaani, may I be (of) Thee...' When Thou, without waiting for him to complete the sentence by saying 'the recipient of a loving, compassionate glance' conferest upon him the blessed state of union with Thee, before Whose feet the blazing crowns of Mukunda Brahmaa and Indra are abased".[3]

The two words 'Bhavaani tvam' (I shall become Thee), being of the same purport as the Mahavakyas 'Aham Brahmaasmi' and 'Tat tvam asi', produce their effect, Advaitic Self-realisation, even though the speaker had not had that meaning in mind, because the Grace of the Goddess acts instantly. Equal to that Grace is the self-forgetful absorption of the devotee who prays:

> "May all that I am, and say, and do, be received by Thee as tokens of my surrender at Thy feet—my words Thy *japa,* the work of my hands the *mudras* invoking Thy protection, the movement of my feet Thy circumambulation, the food that I eat, oblations made into the fire, the act of lying down my prostration before Thee, my enjoyments and pastimes the ritual of Thy worship".[4]

The second Part of the *Soundarya Lahari* to which the name of the poem (which means 'Waves of Beauty') is specially appropriated, contains about sixty verses, most of which are devoted to a detailed description from head to foot of the charms of the Goddess. Of this genre Sri Sankara is credited with quite a few pieces, celebrating among others, Siva and Vishnu. Conventional notions of beauty differ from clime to clime. The charm that 'married eye-brows' held for the Greeks is inexplicable to us. Our poets' praise of eyes extending to the ears, of heavy hips and tenuous waists, puzzles other peoples. The old Indian, like the old Greek, avowed a frank delight in the perfection of the human anatomy in which there was no hint of prurience. And in dealing with the Divine Personality, religious poetry, like iconography, aimed at suggesting a mental image that would serve as a support for meditation. In *Soundarya Lahari* Sri Sankara describes the beauty of the Devi in terms that never allow us to forget that She is the Great Goddess, Mother of gods and Consort of the All-Highest. And as gods are the children of light, she is the Supernal Light, the 'Knowledge that surpasseth all in beauty" of the *Kena Upanishad.* While apologising for bringing his rushlight to wave before Her shrine, he prays that, being lit in the blaze of Her glory, it may burn for ever as a testimony:

> "O Thou That art the Support of all that lives! O Lady of the ever-smiling countenance and the limitless virtues, O Fountain

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3. भवानि त्वं दासे मयि वितर दृष्टिं सकरुणाम्
इति स्तोतुं वाञ्छन् कथयति भवानि त्वमिति यः।
तदैव त्वं तस्मै दिशसि निजसायुज्यपदवीं
मुकुन्दब्रह्मेन्द्रस्फुटमकुटनीराजितपदाम् ॥

4. जपो जल्पः शिल्पं सकलमपि मुद्राविरचना
गतिः प्रादक्षिण्यक्रमणमशनाद्याहुतिविधिः।
प्रणामः संवेशः सुखमखिलमात्मार्पणदृशा
सपर्यापर्यायस्तव भवतु यन्मे विलसितम् ॥

of justice, O Knowledge indefeasible That dwellest by choice in the hearts of the devout who are ruled by the Veda, but Thyself acknowledgest no law, O Thou That the upanishads exalt as the Eternal Sanctuary from which all fear flees, seal Thou with Thy approval this panegyric of mine".[5]

The 'Prajnaanam Brahma' of the Upanishads is of far more profound import than the 'Sophia' of Plato or the 'Gnosis' of the Neo-Platonists. But Plato made his Socrates say that 'wise' is 'a great word that belongs to God alone.' And of the beatuy of wisdom he said, "Her loveliness would have been transporting if there had been a visible image of her." An English poet steeped in Platonic ideas pictured Sapience as "the sovereign darling of the Deity" seated in His bosom. And, with a stylised imagery that is almost iconic, Edmund Spenser went on to speak of the Divine Widsom as

"Clad like a Queen in royal robes most fit
For so great power and peerless majesty,
And all with gems and jewels gorgeously
Adorned, that brighter than the stars appear,
And make her native brightness seem more clear."

But this transcendental wisdom—Brahma Vidyaa in our terms—may, as the Greek philosopher said, be seen only with the inner eye. Sri Sankara conveys this truth in a highly poetic way, implicitly in verse 95 of the *Soundarya Lahari* (beginning with the words *Puraarater-an tahpuramasi* and more explicitly in the following verse) from the other *Ananda Lahari*:

"The savour of ghee and the sweetness of milk and honey and of the juice of the grape cannot be described, they can only be enjoyed. How then can the tongue of man utter the praise of Thy beauty, which is for the eyes of Paramesvara alone. Thou, Whose glories numberless baffle even the Vedas' powers of expression ?"[6]

As Spenser said, the only means open to us to behold the Divine Majesty is to look on His works:

"To read enregistered in every nook,
His goodness which His beauty doth declare,
For all that's good is beautiful and fair."

And what greater good can there be for man than to feel the eye of Providence turned on him with maternal solicitude? As the very first' verse of *Soundarya Lahari* points out, when Siva, the Supreme Brahman, actionless, passionless and self-sufficient, is not united with His Sakti (Mahaamaayaa) He cannot so much as lift a little finger (as the saying goes); but when He looks upon Her with desire (*Sa aikshata*, as Sruti has it), then are the worlds born. She is the matrix of the worlds, and the *jivas* are eternally beholden to Her for providing an arena wherein they may wrestle with themselves and win liberation.

"O Daughter of the Mountain-King, (says another verse) the wise ones say that the creation and the dissolution of the universe are done by the opening and the closing of Thy eyes. That is why, I am sure, Thou art careful never to close those eyes, lest the worlds that owe their existence to Thy Grace should be destroyed".[7]

Here what, in view of the belief that the gods have unwinking eyes, may be normally regarded as a pretty poetic conceit, becomes charged with emotion when we recollect that the Mother's unwinking eyes second Her unsleeping concern for humanity. After thus acknowledging Her solicitude for all creatures, the ardent devotee begs Her, with the illogic of the importunate child, to bestow a special glance of love and pity on him, the lowest of the low, "out of the corner of those beautiful eyes, cool like the half-open water-lily; Thou wilt lose nothing by that, Mother—does not the moon shed his gentle radiance impartially on the thorny thicket and the mansion-terrace?—but it will make all the difference in the world

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5. निधे नित्यस्मेरे निरवधिगुणे नीतिनिपुणे
निराघाटज्ञाने नियमपरचित्तैकनिलये ।
नियत्या निर्मुक्ते निखिलनिगमान्तस्तुतपदे
निरातङ्के नित्यं निगमय ममापि स्तुतिमिमाम् ॥

6. घृतक्षीरद्राक्षामधुमधुरिमा कैरपि पदैः
विशिष्यानाख्येयो भवति रसनामात्रविषयः ।
तथा ते सौन्दर्यं परमशिवदृङ्मात्रविषयः
कथंकारं ब्रूमः सकलनिगमागोचरगुणे ॥

7. निमेषोन्मेषाभ्यां प्रलयमुदयं याति जगती
तवेत्याहुः सन्तो धरणिधरराजन्यतनये ।
त्वदुन्मेषाज्जातं जगदिदमशेषं प्रलयतः
परित्रातुं शङ्के परिहृतनिमेषास्तव दृशः ॥

to me."[8] The music of Her voice, says the poet—and here we must remember that the veda speaks of Her as *vaak*, and esoteric wisdom regards *Uma* as the Pranava, the essence of the Veda—silences Sarasvati's *veena*:

> "When, pleased with the melodies which she plays, celebrating Pasupati's exploits, Thou openest Thy mouth to utter a word of praise, Thy voice throws into the shade even that heavenly music, and Sarasvati quietly puts the *Veena* away out of sight packed in its case."[9]

The notice of this great hymn of praise may fittingly conclude with the verse in which the devotee prays that it may be given to him to remain absorbed with all the strength of his mind and his five senses. like the six-footed honey-bee in the flower, "in adoring contemplation of those feet of Thine, which are lovely as a bunch of *mandaara* flowers; they grant the humble all that the mind can desire, and deluge the world with a flood of beauty".[10]

Among the shorter poems, some deal with the esoteric worship of different manifestations of the Devi, such as Lalita Paramesvari and Tripurasundari; some celebrate her favourite shrines like Srisailam and Kalahasti, or special aspects of Her bounty, as when She, Annapurna, gives food both for body and soul to Her children, who comprise all creation. And some, like the *Ambaashtakam*, dwell upon Her unconventional moods, which add to the rich ambiguity by which Maayaa defies definition. Sri Sankara's poetic diction is as a rule simple and euphonious, and the verses have an easy flow and rhythm. The *Ambaashtakam* of eight verses is an exception, in that it freely uses dictionary words and resorts to verbal artifices such as alliteration and assonance. But there is an *elan* in the spring and swing of the verses, which matches the youthful exuberance of the sentiment and the homely realism of its presentment of Her as a Kali who does not inspire dread.

> "Drumming softly on the human skulls Her beloved wears strung in a garland, and jauntily sticking a screw of palm leaf in Her ear in place of the gold ear-ring, She, who scatters the fears of Her devotees as the sight of the mongoose scatters serpents, and the shining dust of Whose feet the sages love to take on their heads, plays with Her mates. May that Kali of the black curls and the bright *tilak*-mark make my mind dwell on Her lotus feet like the bee[11]."

The following verse in the *Ānanda Lahari* (a short poem of 20 verses) brings Her before our eyes in another mood, by the triumphant use of "the elaboration of a figure of speech" which, as T. S. Eliot pointed out, was one of the characteristic devices employed by the English metaphysical poets; it is a typical instance, even to the point of making the crucial comparison hinge on a pun.

> "This gentle vine, which is known as *Chit* (Sentience) and which confers bliss, grew on the mountain of snows; She has hands for shoots and pearls for flowers, with bees in the guise of black ringlets hovering over them; She leans for support on her tree (Sthaanu, the Rock-like, one of the names of the Lord Siva); and she bends gently under the weight of those fruits, Her breasts; the sap of wisdom rises high in Her. And ah!

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8. दृशा द्राघीयस्या दरदलितनीलोत्पलरुचा
दवीयांसं दीनं स्नपय कृपया मामपि शिवे ।
अनेनायं धन्यो भवति न च ते हानिरियता
वने वा हर्म्ये वा समकरनिपातो हिमकरः ॥

9. विपञ्च्या गायन्ती विविधमपदानं पशुपते-
स्त्वयारब्धे वक्तुं चलितशिरसा साधुवचने ।
तदीयैर्माधुर्यैरपलपिततन्त्रीकलरवां
निजां वीणां वाणी निचुलयति चोलेन निभृतम् ॥

10. ददाने दीनेभ्यः श्रियमनिशमाशानुसदृशी-
ममन्दं सौन्दर्यप्रकरमकरन्दं विकिरति ।
तवास्मिन् मन्दारस्तबकसुभगे यातु चरणे
निमज्जन्मज्जीवः करणचरणः षट्चरणताम् ॥

11. यालीभिरात्मतनुताली सकृत्प्रिय-
कपालीषु खेलति भय-
व्यालीनकुल्यसितचूलीभरा
चरणधूलीलसन्मुनिवरा ।
वालीभृति श्रवसि तालीदलं
वहति याऽलीकशोभितिलका
साऽलीकरोतु मम काली मनः
स्वपदनालीकसेवनविधौ ॥

> She walks, busy in Her ministry of love for the suffering"[12].

Unforgettable is that picture of sweet innocence and engaging modesty, and worthy of Her to whom the scriptures accord unique veneration as *Sati* and *Amba*. The imagery of the running vine, clinging to its stout support and sending out tendrils of affections into the circumambient ether is great poetry as well as true metaphysics representing the unique relationship between Isvara, Maayaa and *Jagat*. We shall take leave of Sankara, the world teacher and *jivan-mukta*, who, become as a little child again, appeals with confiding faith to the Mother of Mercy, and in doing so speaks for all frail humanity: "Thou hast many children, Mother, who are good men and exemplary sons. I am the lone black sheep among them. I showed myself lacking in my love and duty to Thee. But shouldst Thou give me up for lost? There might be a bad son; but who ever heard of a bad mother?"[13]

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12. हिमाद्रेः संभूता सुललितकरैः पल्लवयुता
सुपुष्पा मुक्ताभिर्भ्रमरकलिता चालकभरैः ।
कृतस्थाणुस्थाना कुचफलनता सूक्तिसरसा
रुजां हन्त्री गन्त्री विलसति चिदानन्दलतिका ॥

13. पृथिव्यां पुत्रास्ते जननि बहवः सन्ति तरलाः
परं तेषां मध्ये विरलतरलोऽहं तव सुतः ।
मदीयोऽयं त्यागः समुचितमिदं नो तव शिवे
कुपुत्रो जायेत क्वचिदपि कुमाता न भवति ॥

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SAKTI CULT IN INDIA

By
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The worship of Sakti or the female principle is a widespread cult in India, and along with Saivism and Vaishnavism it constitutes one of the three principal divisions, though never with any rigid line of demarcation, of the *saguna* worship, *i.e.*, worship of God with attributes. Every division of Hindu theology and philosophy prescribes the worship of Sakti or Devi but gods like Siva, Vishnu and Brahma occupy the supreme position, at least in the eyes of their respective followers, while the female deities hold invariably a subordinate status mainly as consorts. No less than three and a half scores of Devi images, directly or indirectly associated with the cult of Siva have been described by T. A. Gopinatha Rao.[1] Also, there are goddesses associated with Vishnu, Brahma and several other minor gods. In the Sakti cult, however, the supreme deity is the Devi or the female principle that personifies the universal energy and man's inherent, but not potent, psychic power. The harnessing of this psychic force or *sakti* is the aim of the *mantra*—and *yoga-sastras*, both having a close relation with the *tantra*. All these *sastras* centre round the Sakti manifesting in multitudes of foιms associated with various moods, age, aspects and attributes.[2] Each such form is known by a particular name and has definite iconographic features associated with mythology, and also philosophy.

The philosophic basis of the Sakti worship, as outlined in the *Durgastotras* in the *Mahabharata*, and the *Aryastava*, in its supplement of *Harivamsa*, and finally, in the *Devimahatmya* section of the *Markandeya-purana*, is without any doubt, a later development. At the beginning it was nothing less than a fertility rite centring round the woman's procreating power. It differed from the worship of Siva-linga---it is well known that Saktism is more akin to Saivism than Vaishnavism—only in its emphasis on the feminine rather than the masculine role of procreation. The concept of Mother Goddess is just an outcome of idealized form of primitive fertility rites so universal in different ancient civilizations. In India, it existed as early as the Harappan, or even pre-Harappan times ; the terracotta figurines found over a wide region of the ancient world—from the Indus to the Nile—are generally identified as Mother Goddess. They are practically always nude but for the ornaments, and have wide girdle and impressive head-dresses.

1. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. 1—pt. II (Madras, 1914), pp. 332—72.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 332—33. He writes, " She is variously named ; sometimes according to her imagined age ; thus, when she is worshipped as an year old baby, she is known by the name of Sandhya ; if she is conceived to be two years old, she is called Sarasvati ; if of seven years of age Chandika ; if of eight years of age, Sambhavi ; if of nine years of age, Durga or Bala ; of ten years of age Gauri, of thirteen Mahalakshmi ; and of sixteen Lalita. Sometimes she is named in recognition of one or other of her heroic achievements ; for instance, she is called Mahishasuramardini in consequence of her having destroyed the Mahishasura. There are special forms of images corresponding to these various ways of conceiving the goddess Devi, "

The glyptic art of the Harappa culture also abounds in the representation of Mother Goddess, with emphasis on her connexion with the plant and vegetation world. On one of the seals, a two-branched *asvattha* is shown as if springing forth from a circle on the ground, and in between the branches stands a female deity in nude having long hair and a pair of horns. On another seal a nude female figure is depicted upside-down with legs wide open and a plant issuing out from her womb. It connotes clearly the fertility aspect of the nude female figure, or Mother Goddess of the Harappa culture. Such motifis continued even in the historical period: for example, an early Gupta terracotta sealing from Bhita, in Uttar Pradesh, depicts a goddess in the same pose, with the difference that instead of a plant a lotus issues out of her neck. This motif reminds one of a huge stone sculpture of Mother Goddess, from Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh, seated with legs wide apart but without the upper half of the body. A similar sculpture is enshrined in one of the temples at Alampur, Andhra Pradesh. Moreover, there are terracottas from Nagarjunakonda and Kondapur bearing identical representations. At the first look, it appears to be more a *purnakumbha* with overflowing foliage than a female torso; from this point of view it will not be a misnomer to call it a *vamakumbha.*

Apart from the terracotta figurines, the Indus valley sites like Harappa, Mohenjodaro Chanhudaro etc., have also yielded ringstones, phalli and like objects. All this may tend to show the association of primitive fetish worship with the cult of Mother Goddess, a strand which has its continuity even today. In Kerala, the Bhagavati is often represented by a stone, and she has to be worshipped, according to some local tradition in hypaethral temples. Mention may be made here of a verse in the *Silappadikaram*, the Tamil epic, referring to a shrine with a stone as the object of worship (*nedum kal ninra manram*)[3]. Further, in practically every temple, in Kerala, the *sapta-matrikas* (Brahmani, Mahesvari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamundi) are represented by seven circular-cylindrical stones, with two more in a separate row signifying the figures of Virabhadra and Ganesa. Incidentally, some scholars have tried to trace back the origin of the idea of the *sapta matrikas* to the period of the Harappa culture. Again, in all the *sakti pithas*, the worshipping object is generally a stone although it is taken to symbolize some severed limb of Sakti or the other[4]. The aniconic representation of Mother Goddess seems to have another line of development. Banerjea has compared the *chakras* and *yantras* of the Sakti worship, with protohistoric ring-stones which had their continuity, in the form of decorated stone-discs or rings in the Maurya and Sunga periods[5].

It is evident from the foregoing that the idea of Mother Goddess, later manifesting in various anthropomorphic forms, goes back to the protohistoric times, and perhaps in those periods the female force played an important role in the religious pattern of several ancient cultures. The position altered considerably with the arrival of Vedic ritualism which relegated the female deities to subordinate position. No doubt, the Vedic sages assigned specific roles to Aditi, the Divine Mother, Ushas, the goddess of dawn, Vak, the goddess of speech, Sarasvati, the river-goddess but these were mostly personifications of abstract attributes or natural phenomenon. Of course, these Vedic goddesses also inspired substantially the epic and Puranic concepts of Sakti worship. At the same time, it has to be borne in mind that the names like Ambika, Uma, Durga, Kali, the central figures of the Sakti cult appear for the first time in the later Vedic literature. For example, Kali and Karali are mentioned in the *Mundaka Upanishad* as two of the seven tongues of Agni. Likewise, Ambika is invoked in the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* as Durga, Vairochani, Katyayani and Kanyakumari. The emergence of these deities in the later Vedic period may indicate a process of fusion of the existing non-Aryan ideas with those of the Vedic. Similarly, the impact of the Vedic ideas and ritualism also changed imperceptibly the character of many non-Aryan gods and goddesses. The fact that the goddess has been described in the *Aryastava* of the *Harivamsa*, as Aparna (*i.e.*, not even covered with leaf), Nagna-Savari and Parna-

3. K. R. Srinivasan, " Some Aspects of Religion as Revealed by Early Monuments and Literature of the South ", *Journal of the Madras University*, XXXII, No. 1 (1960) p. 135.

4. J. N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography* (Calcutta 1956), p. 83. That the concept of the Saktipithas was well-known in the seventh century *A.D.*, is evident from the testimony of Hiuen Tsang.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 168—71 and 488.

Savari (covered with leaf) and that she is well worshipped by the Savaras, Pulindas, and Barbaras will show the presence of non-Aryan elements in the concept of the composite goddess, wherein several aspects such as 'mother' 'daughter' 'sister' and 'terrific', and 'pacific', aspects etc., converge to give rise to the great goddess Sakti.

The mother aspect latent in the concept of the Jaganmata or Jagadamba of the Puranas and in the Vedantin's concept of Maya is derived possibly from the old idea of Mother Goddess who is free from the fierce aspect so pronounced in the conceptions of Kali, Mahishasuramardini, Durga and even in the south Indian goddess Korravai. And this terrific aspect is practically the core of the Sakti cult, and it might have been the continuation of another very old tradition. The fierce aspect of Sakti is not confined to the present geographical boundaries of India, for there are goddesses in the Egyptian and Babylonian cultures who may easily be compared with the Indian goddesses like Kali and Chamunda. Anat, the Babylonian goddess as described in the new Ugaritic text ascribable to the middle of the second millennium *B.C.*, shares several common features with the Egyptian goddess Hathor-Sekhmet and the Indian goddess Kali. Anat comes upon her brother-consort Baal and as he is beautiful she derives pleasure in eating his flesh without a knife and drinking blood without a cup. The theme, no doubt, differs but similarity in motifs is really striking specially between Kali and Anat, for both adorn themselves with a necklace of heads and a girdle of hands, besides engaging in wild slaughter and joyous drinking of their victim's blood[6]. The propitiation of Kali or Bhagavati is still a living cult in Bengal and Kerala. According to a theory of cultural diffusion the survivals of old practices are to be sought not in the original home but outside, almost in the periphery. Viewed from this point of view the predominance of the Sakti cult in Bengal and Kerala need not be taken as peculiar to these regions alone as it might have been once widespread in different parts of India. In Kerala, the cult received fresh impetus by an order of the Chera King that all should worship the chaste and heroic Kannaki, the heroine of the Tamil Classic, *Silappadikaram* ; Kannaki, in fact, was later identified with Durga or Bhagavati.

The terrific aspect is also present in the conceptions of Durga and Korravai, the latter known primarily from the early Tamil literature. Korravai with her stag or lion mount, seems to have an independent existence before, although in later times she practically got merged with Durga—both, however, reflecting a common trend of ideas. But the conception of Korravai, as outlined in the *Vettuvavari* of the *Silappadikaram*, appears to be quite developed as "she combined in her the concepts of Siva and Vishnu and Uma and in her attributes, the three *gunas*[7]." Here she is considered as the younger sister of Vishnu and consort of Siva. "She is also said to be *Gnanakkolundu*, goddess of higher knowledge (*Ayakalai*) and the hidden secret of the Vedas, and in another context *Mayaval* (*Silappadikaram*, vi : 59), pointing to the beginning of the concept of the Devi being both *Vidya sakti* (supreme knowledge) and *Maya sakti* (nescience)."[8] She is said to have destroyed Daruka and Mahishasura. That the Mahishasuramardini form became very popular in South India is evident from her sculptural representations at Mahabalipuram, Gangaikonda cholapuram, Madathukkovil and Namakkal etc. Devi engaged in combat with the Buffalo-demon is a motif which can easily be traced back to the Gupta period as is evident from the miniature stone reliefs of the Gupta period from Bhita and a relief carved on the facade of the Udayagiri cave near Vidisa[9]. The goddess is depicted variously with two, four, eight or ten arms, and generally with a lion mount. In the autumnal Durga worship in Bengal almost an identical type of icon is modelled in clay.

The Mahishasuramardini form of Sakti is one of her earliest and the most important forms described beautifully in the *Devimahatmya* section of the *Markandeya Purana* wherein, the philosphical basis of the Sakti cult has fully been enunciated. Here she is the source of all divine and cosmic evolution, embodiment of all the *gunas—sattva*, *raja* and *tama*. Sakti is really the "formless absolute principle immanent in the whole universe as the supreme and all-pervading

6. Marvin Pope, "Goddesses Anat and Kali," *Summaries of papers of the XXVI International Congress of Orientalists*, New Delhi 1964, pp. 15—16.
7. K. R. Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
8. *Ibid*, p. 153.
9. For detailed description, *see* J. N. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, pp. 497—502.

consciousness, but the great goddess also assumes various forms of pacific and terrific character (*Saumyani yani rupani ....Yani chatyantaghorani*")[10]. The one single supreme being is Mahalakshmi, conceived as a four-armed goddess, out of whom emanate Sarasvati, Lakshmi, and Mahakali representing *sattva, raja* and *tama gunas*. From these three forms of Sakti, one primary and the others emanatory, evolve other gods like Brahma, Rudra and Vishnu.

The esoteric rites and practices of Tantricism practically engulfed the philosophical approach to Saktism, specially in the medieval period in eastern India : the means became all-important rather than the goal. A Tantric *sadhaka* aspires to attain salvation through various *yogic* practices ; his primary aim is to awaken the *kundalini sakti* quitely sleeping at the *muladhara*[11]. Effects produced through various *yogic* exercises may have also been shown by means of diagrams called by the names of *chakras* (having angles and petal-like parts) and *yantras* (having only angles). Even these *yantras* and *chakras*, of them specially the *Srichakra*, are objects of worship in different parts of India ; Sankara and other seers are said to have installed *Srichakra* in important temples[12]. Tradition also ascribes Sankaracharya, the greatest exponent of Advaita, the authorship of the famous Tantric text *Saundaryalahari* and a commentary on the *Lalita Trisati*. He is said to have been a worshipper of Devi.

It is evident from this rapid survey of the development of Saktism in India that its genesis goes back to the hoary past. It followed, on the whole a complicated pattern of development absorbing in its broad tangle of doctrines, rituals and practices many trends primitive, magical as well as philosophical. With the assimilation of new ideas, formulation of new philosophy and adoption of Tantric esoteric practices it has now attained the distinction of a complicated system that still draws millions of Indians into its manifold vistas.

10. J. N. Banerjea, *op. cit*., p. 496.

11. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *op. cit*., p. 329, writes " The practice of holding the breath and controlling it for the purpose of rousing the *Kundalini Sakti* possibly brings into active play some latent power residing in the several parts of the spirit cord of the human being which has not been as yet examined by Western Science.'

12. K. R. Venkataraman: " Sakti Cult in South India." *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, Calcutta 1956, pp. 255-56.

त्वत्पादाम्बुजं अर्चयामि परमं त्वां चिन्तयाम्यन्वहं
त्वामीशं शरणं व्रजामि वचसा त्वामेव याचे विभो।
वीक्षां मे दिश चाक्षुषीं सकरुणां दिव्यैश्चिरं प्रार्थितां
शंभो लोकगुरो मदीयमनसस्सौख्योपदेशं कुरु ॥

Oh, Sambhu, Origin of the Good, and Preceptor of the whole world! Initiate my mind into the art of Bliss! I make floral offerings at your feet! I always meditate upon you! I petition to you for refuge! I beg of you alone! Do kindly cast your divine glances over me — glances for which even the celestials yearn and yearn.

This *sloka* from Sankara's *Sivanandalahari* — where Sankara sings in all humility before Siva — curiously enough seems to strike an autobiographical note, in the eye of the devotee of the Acharya, hinting the identity of the singer and the object sung of. Here Siva is addressed as the World-Teacher (*Lokaguru*), which is an appellation of Sankara himself (Jagadguru). Again Siva is called *Sam-bhu,* the Origin of Goodness. Our Acharya was Sankara — he who *did* good to the entire world.

As Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Acharya says: "Siva remained as actionless Dakshinamurti or Sambhu, the Source of Goodness. But owing to the upsurge of the dark forces of Kali, people were loth to search for and go to that Source and drink of the Goodness there. So Sam-bhu had to become active. He had to *do* good to the world and therefore Himself came down to the people and bestowed Goodness on them. Sam-bhu became Sam-kara, the Acharya".

Sankara's devotion to Siva as such was most natural. It was love of the Self, where the Self encompassed the whole universe.

Sankara's getting the five crystal lingas from Siva, the *Siva panchayatana* worship in his maths with Siva in his Chandramoulisvara aspect as the Presiding Deity, and his various hymns on Siva among which the longest and most moving is "*Sivanandalahari*" — all point to his intense devotion to Siva. The Lord Siva was also immensely beneficent to his Avatar. When Sankara visited Tiruvidaimarudur (Madhyarjuna) and his *advaita* was severely assailed by other schools, Siva, enshrined in the temple, Himself proclaimed the truth of *Advaita* thrice, "Satyam Advaitam, Satyam Advaitam, Satyam Advaitam." Who else could testify to the truth of Sankara's *Advaita,* except *Siva,* who is Himself *Advaita* according to Mandukya Upanishad?

(*Picture*: Mahalinga Siva of Tiruvidaimarudur)

Artist: 'SILPI'

SAIVAM

(Faith of Siva)

God is Omnipresent and All-pervasive. By the very nature of these qualities, He cannot have any form. He is, therefore, formless. But in order to bless us He assumes innumerable forms. The Linga form in which we worship Siva is symbolic of both His formlessness and form. It is symbolic of form because it has a particular shape ; it is symbolic of formlessness because it has neither head nor other limbs like other images. The very conception of a Linga denotes something which has neither a beginning nor an end. The literal meaning of Linga is 'symbol.'

If we go into the significance of the symbol of Linga, we will realise that it is intended to bring the Unknown within our mental comprehension.

Isvara assumes various forms in pursuance of His Divine Sport (Leela). This prime manifestation with something like a form cf the formless Isvara, is known as the Lingodbhavamoorthi.

A crystal Linga is believed to be superior to other Lingas, in all respects. This is because of the quality of the crystal itself, which has no colour of its own. A crystal reflects the colour of the object with which it comes into contact. The significance of this is that Isvara becomes what an ardent devotee desires Him to be. He is the source of all colours and ultimately all colours merge in Him. He is the source of all life, and ultimately all life merges in him. Can there be any truth loftier than this ?

When the static Isvara decides to assume form, He becomes dynamic and manifests Himself in innumerable forms to fulfil His innumerable functions. One such form is Nataraja Siva in cosmic dance.

Nataraja, through His cosmic dance, teaches us that the entire universe is not separate from Him and that everything that is happening in this universe is His divine sport. The raised and slightly inclined foot of Nataraja is a reminder to us that it is only at His feet that we can find a sanctuary.

*

We speak of Siva as He who burnt the God of Love (Kaama) by the look of his eyes and kicked to death the God of Death (Kaala).

Kaala and Kaama are responsible for our endless births and deaths. If we surrender our hearts to Siva, the destroyer of Kaama and Kaala, we will become free from the promptings of the senses and when we are so free, there will be no more births; we will get merged with Isvara. That is why our seers have asked us to worship Siva, the Liberator from birth and death.

*

There is a sloka on Siva commening with the words : maulau Ganga. Sri Paramasiva carries on the top of His head the Ganga and the moon. The water of the Ganga is icy cold and the rays of the moon are also cool. On His hands and legs

and around His neck are entwined snakes which are chill to the touch. On His left side, is Parvati, born of the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, Whose heart melts with motherly affection at the sufferings of humanity, who are all Her children. The compassionate impulses flowing constantly from the heart of Parvati add to the cool objects with which Paramasiva has enveloped Himself. As if all these cooling elements are not enough abhisheka (*ablution*) *is performed to Siva with cold water and milk in the early hours of the cold Maargazhi month. The time of the* abhisheka *is before dawn when dew falls like rain and plunges the world in the grip of a biting chillness. To crown all, His body is also smeared with cool sandal paste. Addressing Siva under such a freezing condition, the devotee-poet asks, 'by what powers are You able to endure the cold of such magnitude?' The devotee answers the query himself by saying : " You cannot know the reason, oh Lord. I alone know it and it is this. You reside permanently in the innermost recess of my heart, which is white hot with anxieties and afflictions. To endure the scorching heat of my heart, You do require all these cooling aids."*

Many people come to me everyday and pour into my ears heart-rending tales of their sorrows and afflictions. What solace can I offer to them except to tell them that their heart aches will be assuaged if they perform abhisheka *to Sri Paramesvara with faith and devotion, doing daily worship to Him.*

*

In the discharge of his function of destruction or dissolution, Siva is popularly depicted as a terrible and cruel God. But far from being cruel, Siva is really kind, merciful and auspicious or sivam *as His very name connotes. This destruction or dissolution is effected through* Pralaya *or deluge.*

To give rest and peace to the tormented souls which have passed through several births and deaths in the course of a kalpa (*aeon*), *Isvara, in the abundance of His mercy, creates a deluge, which lasts for as many years as life existed in the universe between one deluge and another. During this period the souls rest in slumber unaffected by pain and sorrow. On the occasion of the next creation* (*srishti*), *they are born again in accordance with their past deeds,* samskaras. *Thus when the great Vishnu devotee Alvar called out to the Supreme as Mukkannappa* (*Oh, Three eyed Father*) *the suffix ' appa ', signifying paternal affection was applied to the three-eyed Siva, to indicate His supreme grace in helping created beings to be lulled into the slumber of* pralaya *to enjoy rest from their restless lives. It is the same Paramatma that performs the triple functions of creation, conservation and dissolution.*

Siva saved the world from disaster by swallowing the poison generated when the Ocean of Milk was churned. In other words, He took upon Himself the sins of the world in order to save humanity. It is this function of God which Christians attribute to Christ, namely saving the sinners by vicariously suffering for them.

—H. H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI.

SIVA AS THE SUPREME GODHEAD

By

S. LAKSHMINARASIMHA SASTRI.

The vaidic way of life (misnamed Hinduism) comprises a lofty philosophy of Absolute Monism called the Advaita Vedanta, and a rich emotional Theism centred on Divinities like Vishnu, Siva, Sakti, Ganapati, Kumara and Surya. Unlike Philosophy and Theology in other religions which are very often at variance with each other and irreconcilable, the vaidic philosophy and religion are in perfect harmony with each other, the vaidic theism being the magnificent edifice erected on the solid foundations of vaidic philosophy. The philosophy of the Vedas is so abstruse that only the most penetratring intellects can grasp its subtle import and attune their lives to the spirit of its teachings. In short, Advaita Vedanta is for the elect, the adept. But the Vaidic theism caters to the spiritual needs of the common man who is swayed by passions, but who neverthless, hankers after spiritual solace, mental peace and divine grace. For such is intended the six-faceted theism, called the *Shan-Matas* which have been ably codified and established on unassailable foundations by the great Sankara Bhagavat Pada, the greatest among the philosophers and religious reformers of Bharatavarsha.

Saivism is that facet of Vaidic Theism that exalts Siva to the supreme Godhead. Among the apparently polytheistic vaidic pantheon, comprising Indra, Agni, Vayu, Prajapati, Savita and Vishnu, Siva also finds an important place. It should be noted in this context that, though a vast number of gods are extolled in the Vedas, the various names such as Indra, Agni etc., are more often honorifics applied to a single Supreme Isvara, these honorifics being probably functional. This is amply borne out by the fact that in the Vaidic hymns, Agni is often invoked as Rudra, Vishnu as Indra and Varuna as Vishnu. Hence, it should be understood that all these names pertain in different contexts, to the same Supreme Being. This is confirmed by the Vaidic dictum, "The Supreme reality is one, but sages call it by various names"[1]. Hence, the so-called polytheism of the Vedas of which so much propagandist capital is made by evangelists is absolutely imaginary; there being but one Supreme One and none else, and that Supreme One is at once Brahma, Siva, Hari, Indra, the Immutable. the Highest Ruler of the universe, as the *Mahanarayana Upanisahad* puts it[2]. The Dharma Sastras go a step further and declare " God is one, call him Kesava or Siva."[3]

Siva therefore features in the Samhita part of the Vedas as a dominant figure of the Vaidic pantheon and the *Sata-Rudriya* of the Yajus Samhita forms an elaborate string of supplications addressed to Rudra, con-

1. एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।
2. स ब्रह्मा स शिवः स हरिः सेन्द्रः सोऽक्षरः परमः स्वराट् ।
3. एको देवः केशवो वा शिवो वा ।

ceived as a terrific malign Deity, bent upon destruction. He can, however, be properly propitiated, and so propitiated, He bestows all benefits on man. Though ferocious, though armed with his destroying bow[4] He is nevertheless bountiful and there is a beneficent aspect of His far different from the terrific aspect as Rudra-the Siva aspect[5].

These mantras of the *Sata-Rudriya* not merely proclaim His immanence in all things from the lowliest of the lowly to the highest among the high, but stress as well His Transcendental aspect. All the well known appellations of Siva such as Soma, Pasupati, Sankara, Bhava, Bhima etc. occur among these mantras. And the Mahamantra "Namah Sivaya Sivataraya Cha" furnishes the later Saiva cults with their cardinal mantra. And the term "Pasunam Pati" forms the sheet anchor of the later Mahapasupata sect as also of the South Indian Saiva Siddhanta. From all that we gather from the Samhitas,Rudra is pre-eminently a ferocious Deity, and He is constantly implored not to visit his wrath on one's offspring, cattle, horses and one's own self[6]. Hence, though Rudra may be benign and propitious as Siva, He is primarily fierce and vengeful. And though at once immanent and transcendental, His personality is somewhat shadowy, and never distinct, as distinct as we come across in the later Puranas.

For the first time we come across the benign aspect of Siva stressed in the *Svetasvatara* Upanishad wherein He is extolled as the God among Gods, the greatest among divinities, the Lord of lords and the Sovereign of all the worlds[7]. The *Brhadjabalopanishad* describes the five-fold aspect of Siva, comprising Isana as the head, Tatpurusha as the face, Aghora as the thighs, Vamadeva as the privities, and Sadyojata as the feet, the entire body being conceived as Pranava (*Aum*)[8].

The *Atharvasikhopanishad* conceives Siva as the embodiment of all divinities—Brahma. Vishnu, Rudra, Iswara and Siva, and recommends meditation on Siva as the surest means of securing all good[9]. The *Kaivalyopanishad* also prescribes meditation in one's heart of the serene Siva, the very embodiment of Supreme Bliss and the consort of Uma[10]. For the first time, in this Upanishad we obtain a clear prespective of the personality of Siva, divested of His Raudra aspect, cast in anthropomorphic aspect. In contrast to this tendency to invest Siva with a form, there is also a parallel tendency to impersonalise him and define him as the immutable, the Absolute, transcending all phenomenalism, as in the Mundakopanishad text[11].

The tendency to stress the Supreme Isvarahood of Siva in the Svetasvatara, Atharvasiras, Atharvasikha, Brahadjabala and Kaivalyopanishads seems to have been due to the growing influence of the Agamas which claim to be the direct revelations derived from Siva Himself and therefore claim to be of greater authority than even the Vedas. The Saiva Agamas fall under two categories, the Saiva and the Raudra. The Saiva Agamas such as the Kamika,Yojaka and Chintya are ten in number while the Raudra Agamas like the Vijaya Raurava and Vatula are seventeen. The dominant feature of the Agamas is a rigid monotheism stressing the efficacy of devotion and at the same time decrying the efficacy of Karma and Jnana as expounded in the Vedas. Some of the Agamas are positively hostile to the Vedas and expound a pluralistic philosophy.

Lord Siva appears to have attained his fullest stature as the supreme deity in the Mahabharata. In the Anusasana Parva, Sri Krishna himself recounts the glory of Siva. In the IVth Skandha of the Bhagavatapurana the celestials extol Siva after the destruction of Daksha, in the phraseology of the Purusha-sukta, according Siva the same status as Narayana. The Maha Pasupata cult seems to have been as popular as

4. नमस्ते अस्तु धन्वने ।
5. या ते रुद्र शिवा तनूरघोराऽपापकाशिनी ।
6. मा नस्तोके तनये मान आयुषि
   मा नो गोषु मा नो अश्वेषु रीरिषः ।
7. तमीश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरं
   तं देवतानां परमं च दैवतम् ।
   पतिं पतीनां परमं परस्तात्
   विदेम देवं भुवनेशमीड्यम् ॥
8. ईशानेति शिरोदेशं मुखं तत्पुरुषेण तु ।
   ऊरुदेशामघोरेण गुह्यं वामेन मन्त्रयेत् ॥
   सद्योजातेन वै पादान् सर्वाङ्गं प्रणवेन तु ।
9. ब्रह्मा विष्णुश्च रुद्रश्च ईश्वरः शिव एव च ।
   पञ्चधा पञ्चदेवत्यः प्रणवः परिपद्यते ॥
   Also शिव एको ध्येयः शिवङ्करः ।
10. शिवं प्रशान्तं चिदानन्दं उमासहायम् ।
11. प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं शिवं अद्वैतम् ।

the Bhagavata cult in the post Mahabharata era. The Pasupatas, however seem to be the followers of Nakulisa or Lakulisa, the quasi-legendery founder of the sect, who is regarded as the incarnation of Siva himself. The Pasupatas seem to have worshipped the Raudra aspect of Siva adopting cremation grounds as their habitat, indulging in grotesque practices that savoured of perversion and libidinism. These features were specialized with greater gusto by the Kalamukhas and Kapalikas, who sported matted locks, besmeared themselves with ashes from crematoria, bedecked themselves with garlands of human skulls,and quaffed raw toddy—some time human blood—from human skulls, and made obscene advances to women. The characters Kapalakundala and Aghoraghanta in Bhavabhuti's *Malati Madhavam*, are typical of this degenerate sect. For centuries, these perverts haunted the precincts of the Siva shrines in Srisailam, Kanchipuram and Mylapore. It is such extremist reprobates that besmudge the fair name of Saivism and bring opprobrium on it.

In refreshing contrast to the Pasupata cult, there emerges the Pratyabhijnya Saivism of Kashmir, said to have been founded by Somananda, but later expounded by Abhinavaguptacharya who wrote the commentary on the Sutras. Not only does this school register dissent with regard to the Pasupata practices, but it expounds a metaphysics which more or less approaches the Advaitic stand point. Siva according to this system is benign, the merciful Isvara, who projects the cosmic phenomena in Himself, and yet remains totally dissociated from it. In the Pratybhijnya school there is a clear shift towards stressing the benign aspect of Siva.

This tendency finds fuller development in the conception of Siva as Dakshinamurti, the Teacher par excellence[12]. Dakshinamurti is conceived as a youth, surpassingly handsome, seated under the Vata tree, irradiating majesty and serenity, seated facing south, expounding the highest reality through silence to his disciples—disciples, hoary in years and in austerities. And this serene aspect of Dakshinamurti naturally led in due course to the conception of Siva as Nataraja and Somaskanda, the one the very embodiment of Ecstatic Bliss, the other the very embodiment of Divine Grace. And south Indian Saivism in particular betook itself to the worship of these gracious aspects of Siva.

While Meykandar takes an honourel place in the evolution of the Siddhantic Saivism of South India, the herculean labours of the Nayanmars in the revival of Saivism in South India are incalculable. Almost for the first time in the history of Saivism, He is approached with love and not in fear with all the fervid love of a son to his father, a servant to his master, nay, of a spouse to her wedded lord. Sri Jnanasambandha, Vagisa, Sundara and Manickavachaka, gave a new orientation to Siva worship by consecreting all human relationship exclusively to the service of Isvara. In short, a sublime and chaste emotionalism took the place of perverse and morbid ritualism which clung to Siva worship in the earlier cults. Through the out-pourings of their hearts in the Tevarams, through these dulcet cadences steeped in soul-ravishing music, these supermen exalted Saivism to a new height of sobriety, purity and dignity. In their hands, the weird Rudra was transmuted into the compassionate, serene Siva.

In this context we have to take note of the Aradhya Sampradaya that flourished in the Karnataka. This Sampradaya claims to be the most ancient, and the five acharyas who are said to have founded this cult—Renukacharya, Darukacharya, Ekoramaradhya, Panditaradhya and Visvaradhya are said to be the emanations from the five aspects of Siva (sadyojatadi). This Sampradaya accords equal validity to both the Vedas and the Agamas (unlike the Vira Saivism of Basava), lays stress on Linga Aradhana, and it is refreshingly sober in its theology, like the South Indian Theism. Aradhya Sampradaya is singularly free from the perversities and grotesquncesses characteristic of the Lakulisa Pasupata, the Kapalika and the Kalamukha sects.

These various sects of Saivism seem to have been in existence almost from times immemorial. The growth of these degenerate sects was due not merely to the low spiritual equipment of the original followers but more prabably due to the importation of alien practices when aliens were absorbed into the Hindu fold. Through the ages, these various trends in Saivism have been clashing with and crossing one another's path in such a way that there descended an utter chaos in reli-

12. ईशान: सर्वविद्यानां ईश्वर: सर्वभूतानां *etc.*

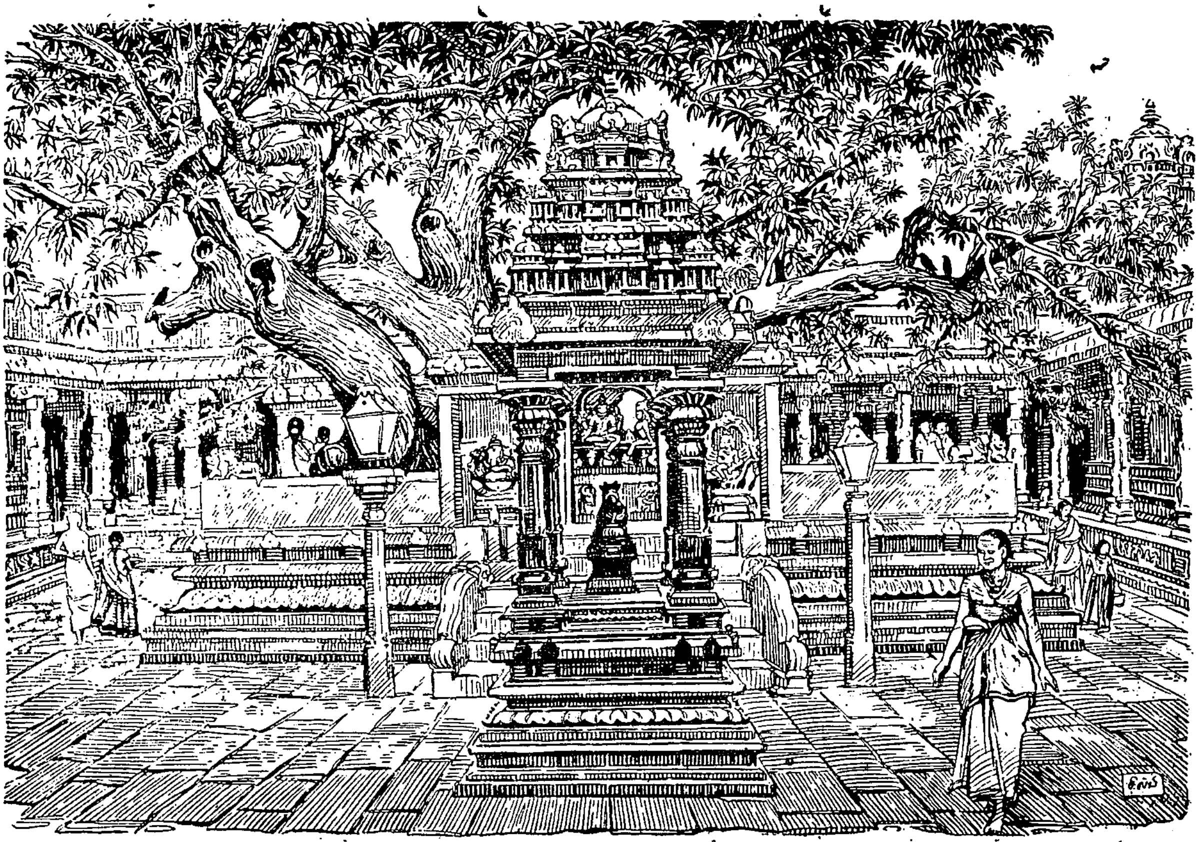
gion. It was at such a time that the great Sankara Bhagavatpada appeared on the scene and embarked, not merely on stabilsing philosophic thought on firm Vaidic foundations, but also on extirpating heresies that had crept into the Vaidic religion. The degenerate sects with their reprehensible practices were ruthlessly rooted out and a chastened Saivism strictly in conformity with the Vaidic religion was established. This chastened Saivism demanded of its votaries a stern austerity,an absolute purity of thought, word and deed, and a serene contemplative worship of Siva as the highest absolute. The linga emblem of Siva embodying as it does, the form and formless aspects of Siva was adopted for worship. The great Sankaracharya himself established lingas for worship at Pasupathinath, Kedarnath and Chidambaram, and in the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha and the Sarada Peetha at Sringeri. And to circumvent any possibility of the cultivation of intolerance and fanticism due to specialised Siva worship, the worship of Panchayatana (incorporating Vishnu, Siva, Sakti, Ganapati and Surya along with Siva) was enjoined on all pious people with freedom to offer special worship to Siva. Thus due to the reformist labours of Sri Sankaracharya, Saivism has been cleansed of all its foul accretions and a sober, austere and serene worship was established. Though the Sankaracharya Mathas are far from being sectarian in the accepted sense of the term, they may nevertheless be said to stress Siva worship as being eminently conducive to the cultivation of that mental detachment which is a prerequisite for the quest after and the realisation of the highest Absolute Brahman.

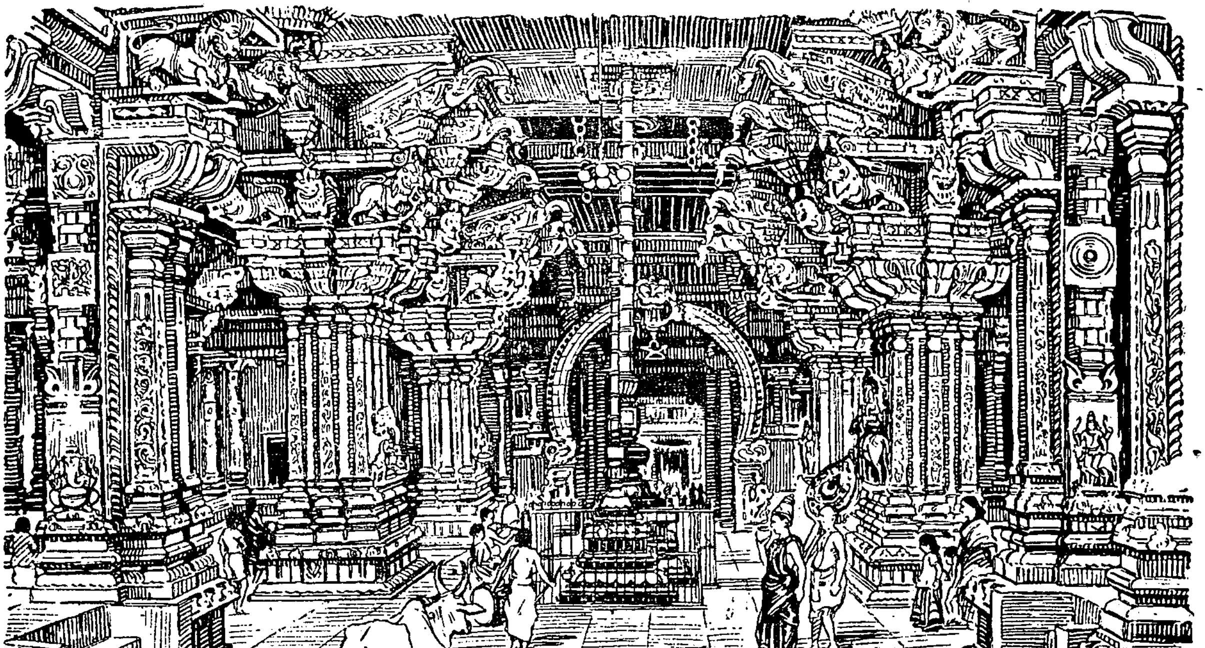
The Siva of the present day Saivism has shed almost all His Raudra characteristics, though a few vestiges such as matted locks, coiling serpents and the tiger-skin garment are still there, clinging to him, reminiscent of His Raudra aspect. Siva is the fountain of grace, the Awakener of the highest knowledge that leads to the final emancipation—Moksha.

Siva worship is therefore a prerequisite for all those that seek self-realisation. As the great Appayya Dikshita has pointed out, without the Grace of Chandrasekhara, it is indeed impossible to realise the Highest truth in one's self :—

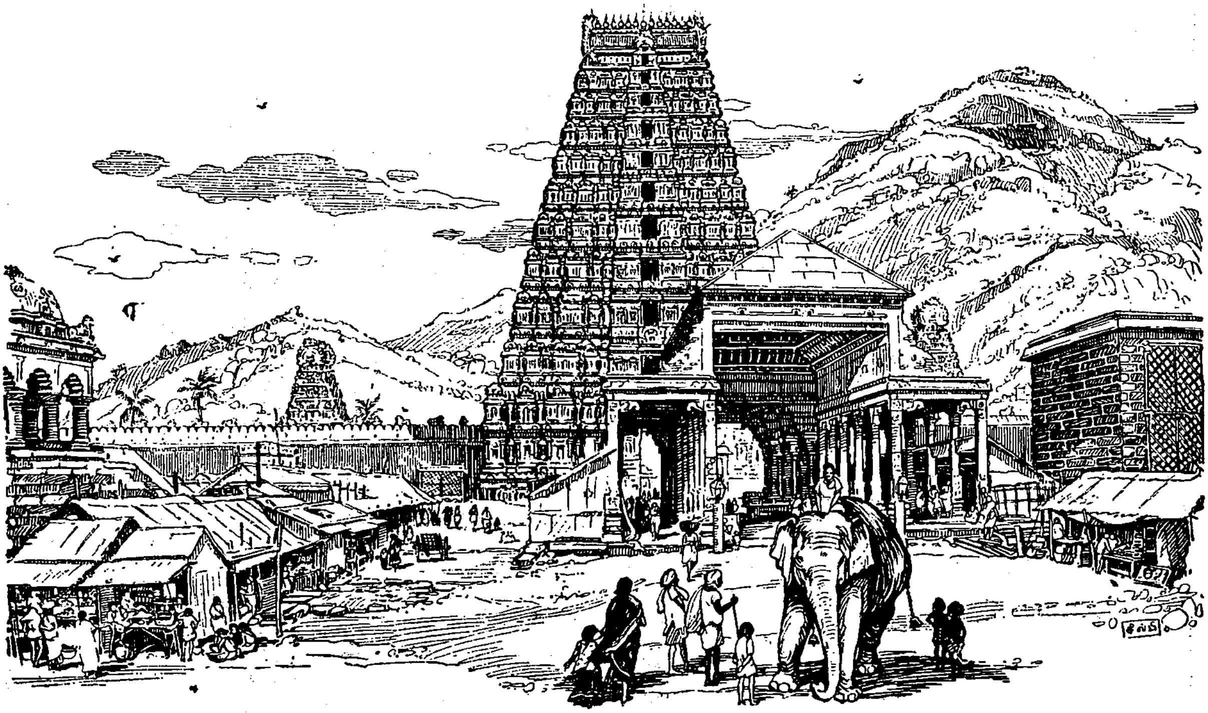
तस्मादनुग्रहादेव तरुणेन्दुशिखामणेः ।
अद्वैतवासना पुंसां आविर्भवति नान्यथा ॥

Kanchipuram (Earth)

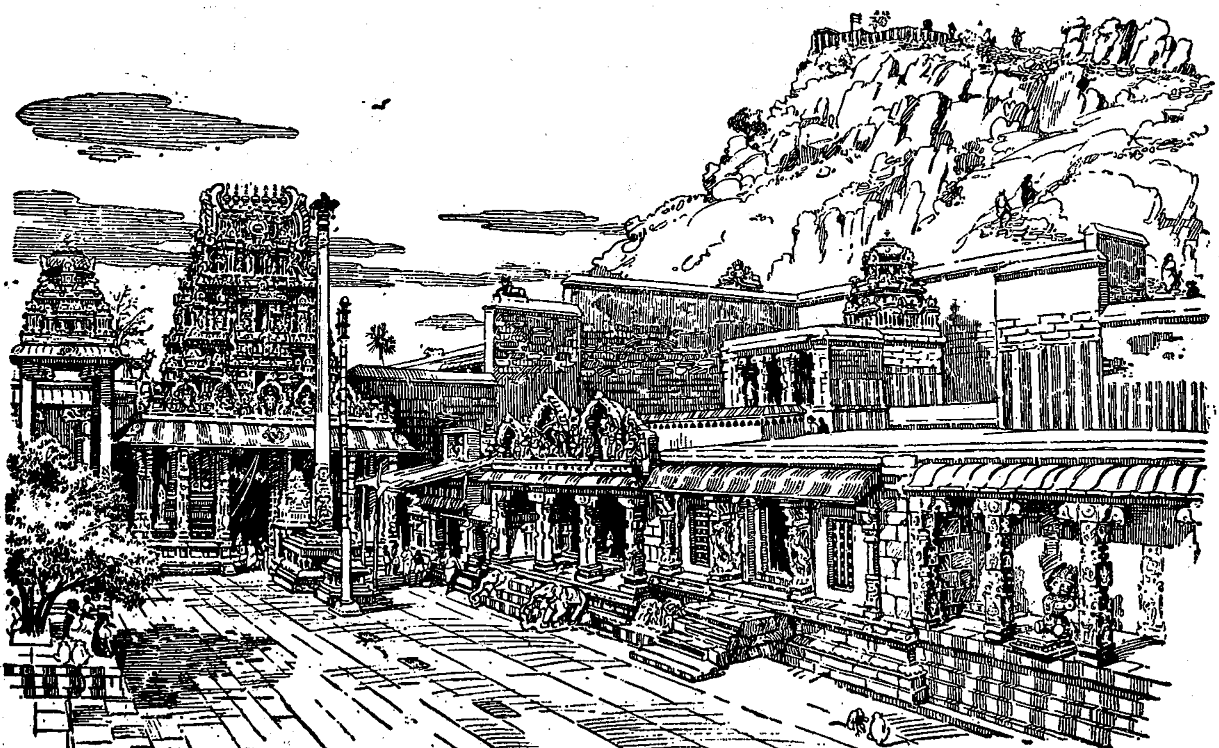




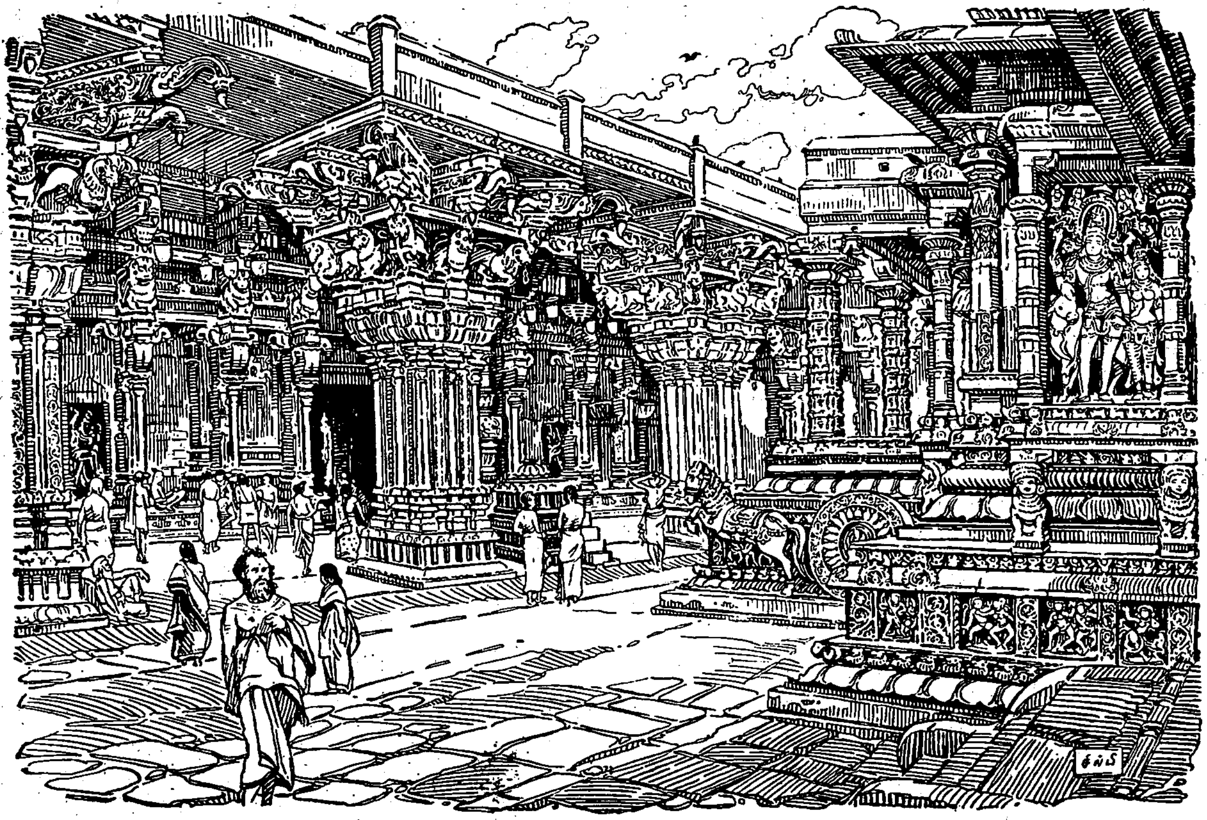
Tiruvanaikka (Water)



Tiruvannamalai (Fire)



Kalahasti (Air)



Chidambaram (Space)

SANKARA'S GREAT HYMN ON SIVA

By
V. A. DEVASENAPATI

Bhakti, says Sri Sankara, is the flow of the mind towards the lotus-feet of the Lord and the fixation of the mind therein. He compares the nature of the attachment obtaining in devotion between the devotee and the Lord to the attachment in the following cases : the seeds of the *ankola* tree and the tree itself to which they get back when they fall from it ; the needle and the magnet ; the chaste woman and her lord ; the creeper and tree ; and the river and the sea. The intimacy of union witnessed in the analogues helps us to realise how intimate should be the union between the devotee and the Lord. Devotional songs are of great help to devotees endeavouring to have a close relationship with the Lord. Not only has Sankara given us a clear idea of the nature of true devotion but he has also given us devotional songs of great beauty and religious fervour. Among his numerous hymns on Siva, the *Sivanandalahari* stands out as a work which appeals to those of advanced spirituality as well as to those who have just begun their spiritual pilgrimage.

The second verse of the *Sivanandalahari* may be paraphrased thus : 'victory to the flood of Siva-bliss (*Sivanandalahari*), which flows from the river of Siva's story (*charita*), removes the dust of sin, runs through the channels of the intellect, destroys sorrow caused by *samsara* and remains in the lake of the mind.' *Siva-Charita* is a narrative of Siva's gracious acts. Sankara teaches us that by listening to such a narrative, we not only get rid of our impurities but we are also made permanent recipients of His bliss. To meditate upon the Lord who is supreme purity is to shed our impurity and acquire His purity. Sankara's concern is to enable us to train our minds on the right lines. He dwells in some hymns on the good tendencies of the mind, and in others, on its evil tendencies. This is to make us realise that we must endeavour to root out the evil tendencies and strengthen the good ones. Let us recall here some of the many sublime thoughts enshrined in Sankara's *Sivanandalahari.*

Death lies in wait for us. How shall we meet its challenge ? It is by worshipping the lotus-feet of the Lord, not by mere book-learning or logic, that we overcome death. Sankara asks, 'Whether it is a pot, or a lump of clay, or an atom, whether it is smoke, fire or mountain, whether it is cloth or thread—will enquiry along these lines serve as a remedy for gruesome death ?' He tells us that such discussions result only in our throats getting dry. Hence it is wise to refrain from such useless pursuits and turn instead to worship of the Lord.

Worship must be such us to make us dedicate ourselves entirely to the Lord. Our mind, senses and body should be used wholly for this purpose. Our mind should abide at His lotus-feet, our speech should be used in His praise, our hands raised in His worship, our ears in listening to His story, our intellect in meditation on Him and our eyes in looking at His splendid form.

It is comparatively easy to engage the body and the senses in worship but the mind refuses to come under control. As a seer who

can judge the spiritual condition of devotees, Sankara knows the difficulty which most of them feel in controlling their minds. It so happens that the more we try to control the mind, the more intractable it gets. Sankara makes this difficulty an occasion for a humorous appeal to the Lord. What can the poor devotees do in this matter ? Mind is beyond their control. But the Lord, if he so chooses, can assume control of the situation and to His own advantage too ! Does He not go abegging with a skull in His hand ? Let Him take with Him this monkey of a mind. 'It ever roams about in the forest of delusion, dances on the breast-hills of young girls, leaps quickly in all directions from branch to branch of desires and is fickle'. It is, as if Sankara makes us appeal to the Lord thus : 'We shall control our body and speech in worship. We shall leave the remaining third, *viz.*, *manas*, our make-up to be controlled by you'. Indeed this is to make us realise that even the impulse to worship arises from His grace, when we are endowed with such a double-edged instrument as the mind.

Is the mind only like a monkey ? No, it is also like an elephant. Who, then, but the Lord can tame it ? 'Oh Lord Who destroyed the three cities, please bind this elephant to Your feet with the chain of devotion and pull it fast with the goad of courage and the machine of intelligence to prevent it from straying. This elephant is wild with passion and roams about in all directions, doing violent deeds. Seize it skilfully and lead it to the place of stability.'

What, if the Lord refuses to come to our aid, saying that He cannot interfere with the decrees of Brahma the Creator, imposed on men according to their past deeds? Can He not be thus indifferent ? If He is not indifferent, is He powerless ? No, how can it be so ? Did He not, with the tip of His finger-nail sever one of the heads of Brahma ?

Let us try to please the Lord by using our mind in His service and thus place it under His control. How shall we use it ? Sankara tells us that the mind is not only like a monkey and an elephant. It is also like a horse. Here, then is an attractive possibility. The Lord uses a bull for His rides. Will not a horse be a better mount ? 'Oh Lord, riding about on a bull ! Mount my mind which is auspicious and capable of moving quickly and in different ways, which is fast in its movements and able to understand all signs, which is free from blemishes and which possesses all stable characteristics.'

Changing the figure of speech, Sankara likens the mind to a tent which the Lord can use as His residence. 'Enter, oh Lord with Your consort, this resplendent tent of my mind which has the will as the supporting central pole and is fastened with the ropes of constant virtues, which could be shifted anywhere, is many-coloured, is adorned with the figures of lotuses and is moved daily on high ways. May you be victorious !'

Sankara indicates other possibilities. In the manner of setting a thief to catch a thief, we can appeal to Siva, the arch-thief to catch our mind which is a petty thief. 'In its efforts to secure wealth, this thief of a mind wanders widely and breaks into the houses of the rich. Please, Oh Lord, bring it under Your control and shower Your grace on me.'

In this drama of the soul's salvation, if the soul changes its role constantly to escape Him, so can the Lord, to catch and save it. The Lord is not only an arch-thief but He is also a great hunter. Let Him not wander over mountains in His search for wild game. Here in our minds, He can find all sorts of wild animals—jealousy, delusion etc. Let Him satisfy His craving for hunting by entering the wild jungle of our minds.

As a hunter Siva walks on the rough surface of mountains. Accustomed to the softness of the hearts of the yogins, His tender feet may find walk on the mountain, rough going. Besides, His tender feet have also to perform the hard task of kicking the chest of Yama and destroying ignorance (*apasmara*). 'Let Him, therefore, wear the jewelled foot-wear of my mind.' In another verse, Sankara sings, 'Your feet are very tender. Please bring them before me, I shall bear them up with my hands.' Why does Siva walk on the mountains ? Sankara finds a reason therefor. The Lord knows in advance the birth of hard-hearted persons. To protect them, He has to enter their hearts and so He practises walking on mountains as a preparation for the subsequent encounter with hard-hearts. Thus comes about His walk on mountains.

Thus we see that Sankara brings home to us in various ways the dual nature of the human mind. In some verses he describes its evil tendencies and prays (on our behalf) for their correction. In some others, he describes the good tendencies and prays to

the Lord for their retention and use in the service of the Lord. Granting that there are evil tendencies in us, still the Lord should accept us. Does He not wear the crescent in His head ? ' Inertness, animality, impurity and devious movements are not to be found in me. Even supposing that they are to be found, am I not fit to serve you as your ornament ? You wear the crescent on Your head !

The allusion here is to the Lord wearing the moon inspite of all its defects. If He does not forgive and protect the poor ones, who else will ? He is the Lord of souls. Hence He has to protect us by His overwhelming Grace. We are blind and revolve unwisely in the cycle of births and deaths. ' To You who can be poorer in spirit than myself ? To me, who can be more skilful in protecting the poor and being their refuge than You ? You are the greatest friend of the poor. Of the poor, I am the poorest. When such is our indissoluble relationship, You must forgive all my lapses and protect me. This, verily, is the way followed among kinsmen.'

What is it that we should want from the Lord ? It is ceaseless devotion to Him. Here is a peculiar situation. When the sun shines, all darkness disappears. We see it clearly in the sky. The Lord is more luminous than crores of suns. Why, then, do we fail to see Him ? It must be on account of the intensity of our ignorance. ' Please destroy this darkness completely and manifest Yourself directly to me ' sings Sankara.

So long as we are in bondage, we go up and down in the scale of living beings. Even as human beings, we pass through several stages. What does it matter whether we are born as human beings, gods, mountains, as wild animals, as mosquitoes, cows, worms, birds etc. If our hearts are given to Him and flooded with the bliss arising from the contemplation of His feet, nothing else matters. Likewise let us be in any stage of human life —that of a student, house-holder, monk, ascetic, etc. 'When our hearts are Yours, You become ours and You bear the burden of our life !'

What has the Lord to give us ? His food is poison, ornament serpent, clothing animal skin and mount a big bull. But then what do we really need ? We need devotion. Let Him then give us devotion. In a humorous vein Sankara sings, ' I do not know how to churn the ocean to get poison or reach the netherworld to get serpents, or go hunting to procure for You the hide of animals. How can I offer You the things which You like ?' Again, the Lord is not pleased with obeisance, song offerings, meditation etc. Curiously He likes being hit with a bow, a club or a stone. Let Him tell us whether our offering should be along those lines ! Here, Sankara, is referring to the occurrences connected with the life of Arjuna, Manikkavachakar and Sakkiya Nayanar. They were all great devotees of the Lord. Caring none of the precious things rated highly by the world, the Lord has yet at His command all these. Sankara says, ' The golden mountain (Meru) is in Your hands, the Lord of Wealth (Kubera) stays near you. Celestial trees are in Your household as also the celestial cow (Kamadhenu). What can I give you ! May my mind be dedicated to You!'

Siva drank poison to save the world from a deadly poison. He retained it in His throat so that it might not get in and destroy the worlds within Him. This act of great compassion has always stirred the hearts of His devotees to their profoundest depths. Sankara sings, ' Oh Lord of Souls ! Is not this one Supreme act of help sufficient to proclaim your compassion ? To protect the beings, moving and stationary, within and outside, You placed the poison in Your throat. You neither swallowed it nor spat it out.' He asks the Lord in affectionate raillery, ' How did the flaming poison that frightened the gods appear to You ? How did You bear it in Your hand? Was it *jambu* fruit or medicinal ball used by the *Siddhas*? You placed it in your throat. Was it a blue gem ornament ?'

The Lord's compassion for us is boundless. What, then, should be the nature of our devotion to Him ? It should be wholehearted and complete. Is there an ideal devotee whose devotion will serve as a model for us ? Yes, there is. He is Saint Kannappar, a wild hunter whose devotion to the Lord has been a source of inspiration to all subsequent generations. His worship was completely unconventional and as completely ideal. There was no trace at all of the sense of ' I ' and ' mine ' in his worship. It was a complete ' sense of the presence of God ' that possessed him in his worship. Sankara sings ' The hunter's foot-wear worn out by use in forest paths was placed between the eye-brows of the Lord of all souls ; the water carried in his mouth became the sacred water for the bath of the conqueror of the three cities ; meat already tasted by him became fresh food offering. What is

impossible for devotion ? The hunter became the greatest of devotees !'

Not only in his *Sivanandalahari* but in his other hymns of Siva also, Sankara has given us invaluable help for eschewing the evil tendencies of our minds and strengthening the good ones in utter dedication to the Lord.

There will be no spiritual impoverishment so long as we follow Sankara's lead in singing the praises of the Lord in utter devotion. Here is his assurance : 'Oh Lord of the Universe ! With the ambrosial waters of the story of Sadasiva, brought with the help of the intellect as water-wheel, speech as vessel, poesy as water-conduits, the crops of devotion in the fields of the heart become richly productive. How can there be (even) the fear of spiritual famine for me ?'

FORMS OF SIVA

By

N. MURUGESA MUDALIAR

Srimad Adi Sankara is said to have read *Suta-Samhita* eighteen times before he wrote his *Brahmasutra Bhashya.* The *Sivamahatmya-Kaanda* of *Suta-Samhita* declares that Siva is immanent in all the manifestations and that whichever *murti* that one may worship, the power or the *sat* that confers *moksha* (liberation) is that bestowed by Siva. Just as, only in a blemishless mirror, one can see the true reflection, so also the grace of Siva may be imparted in some *murtis* more quickly than in others. The Vedas sometimes praise Vishnumurti, sometimes Brahma, sometimes Agni and sometimes Surya but finally Siva only, who alone is worshipped by all the devas in every Kalpa. So Suta Muni tells the rishis of Naimisaranya that if they wished *moksha* they should do *upasana* (worship) to Mahadeva in the forms of Uma-mahesvara, Nilakantha, Virupaksha and Chandrasekhara. This theme recurs in one way or another in *Gnana-Yoga Kaanda, Mukti Kaanda* and *Yajna-Vaibhava Kaanda* of Suta Samhita. Siva alone is declared as the *Sambha vigraha* of all deities. In the *prasada krama* (order of the bounties given by each Divinity), Sivaprasada alone is the highest, while Brahma gives *shanti* (peace), Vishnu *ichaha* (fruition of desires), Ganesa *Jnana* (enlightenment) Parvati *Sankhya-jnana* (the wisdom of *tattvas*) and so forth. Without Sivaprasada there is neither *bhoga* (enjoyment) nor *mukti* (liberation). Even avaidikis (those who do not belong to the Vedic path) are blessed by Sivaprasada, so what doubt is there for Vaidiki-vipras ? So declares *Suta-Samhita.*

Acharya Sankara who established the Advaita Vedanta cannot be said to have given a secondary place to *prasada marga* or *bhakti.* As Shan-mata-sthapanacharya his object was apparently to demonstrate that the *upasana* of the different *murtis* was not to be despised, as at the crest of such upasanas was the one Supreme Brahman. Uniformity or unity in worship is not possible or desirable. Sankara must have been profoundly influenced by *Suta Samhita* in the formulation of the profound philosophic truths and in his devotional outpourings. To him Siva was not a sectarian god but the expression of the Supreme Brahman in advaitic experience, which is beautifully described in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* as *Satyam jnanam anantam brahma anandarupam amrtam yad vibhuti santam, sivam, advaitam.*

In Sankara's philosophical works and *stotras* we come across not only the names and descriptions of various *murtams* (forms) of Siva but also of *ashta-murti* (Siva in the eight forms of earth, water, fire, air, ether, sun, moon and soul). The *Shan-mata* comprising Ganapatyam, Kaumaram, Vaishnavam, Sauram, Saktam and Saivam, is a synthesis of Veda-Tantra-Purana ideas of the propitious forms of the Supreme. Sankara thus gave a practical shape to Hindu Upasana and prevented Hindu belief being divided among hundreds of deities.

The Saiva tradition in South India largely continued the tradition of the Agamas. It speaks of Siva as Chathurtham, Supreme

over Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra and ashtamurti (Eight Forms). Its most beloved aspect is Uma-Mahesvara or *Ammai-appar.* It speaks of 25 murtams of Siva :—

1. Linga murti (the cylindrical symbol denoting at once the form and the formless)
2. Sukhasana murti (seated in the yogic posture of ease).
3. Uma-saka murti (with His consort Uma)
4. Kalyanasundaramurti (as the eternal Bride-groom)
5. Ardhanarisvara murti (with His consort sharing the left half)
6. Somaskanda murti (with the Divine Mother and Skanda)
7. Chakrapradana murti (making a gift of the disc to Vishnu)
8. Trimurti (Siva-Vishnu-Brahma all in one)
9. Ardhangavishnu murti (Vishnu sharing Siva's left half)
10. Dakshinamurti (the Master facing south, who teaches by silence)
11. Bhikshatana murti (as the Beautiful mendicant with skull in hand)
12. Kangala murti (wearing a garland of skulls)
13. Kama-samhara murti (Destroyer of desire)
14. Kalari (one who is timeless)
15. Jalantaraari (Destroyer of the demon Jalantara)
16. Tripurasamhara murti (Destroyer of the Tripura demons)
17. Sarabha murti (He who quelled the ego of Nrsimha, an *avatar* of Vishnu)
18. Ekapada murti (the one-footed Trinity)
19. Bhairava murti (Ghastly God riding a dog)
20. Vrishabarudha murti (seated on the bull of Dharma)
21. Nataraja murti (the Cosmic Dancer)
22. Gangadhara murti (Wearing the river Ganga on his locks)
23. Akkruran (One without cruelty)
24. Kalakalamurti (one who conquers Yama)
25. Chandrasekharamurti (bedecked with the crescent moon on His locks)

These forms are highly aesthetic and philosophic conceptions and express the exploits and the grace of the Lord. In the hymns of the Siva Samayacharyas (Saints Sambandar, Appar, Sundarar and Manikkavachakar) we find frequent references to these forms. They at the same time declared, " Let us sing the thousand names of the One who has no name, no form, nothing " (oru namam oruruvam onrumillarku aayiram tirunaamam paadi tellenam Kottaame ")

St. Manikavachakar sings :—

Behold ! He is the male and the female and the neuter (Pennan aliyenum petriyan kaan).

Again he sings :-

" Him, the God of Gods, not perceived by the King of Devas (Indra), Him the Supreme King of the Triad, who creates, sustains and destroys the worlds, the *First Murti* (the manifest God), the Great Ancestor, My Father who consorts with the Divine Mother!"

The later saint, St. Thayumanavar sings:-

O ! Thou Impersihable Triple Form and Formless. O! Thou Supreme
Intelligence working steadfast in the six forms of Religion (shan-mata)
Who could know thee, lifting the void of maya! Thou dos't dance in the heart of those who think of Thee!

The six forms of religion (*aru samayam*) spoken of in Saivism refers to the six cults:- Bhairava, Vama, Kalamukha, Mahavrata, Pasupata, Saiva. (Sometimes the term is also used to comprise Lokayata, Bauddha, Jaina, Mimamsa (Bhaskara), Pancharatra and Bhattacharya).

The 25 forms represent the Siva-Parakrama and they alone are permissible in temple iconography of Siva. The lofty concept of Somaskanda comprises Siva, Sakti and Kumara. Saiva Samaya in the South is in a sense unitary and it comprises symbolically within its grasp all the forms in the Hindu Pantheon. Its Sastras declare that whomsoever one worships it is the Lord, who has Grace as His consort, that is worshipped and whatever cult one may pursue among the six, it is the Lord that manifests in each. (aruvakai samayattarkumangaange arul purivaan). Salvation is not denied to anyone even to those who is outside the true faith, declared the saints of Saivism.

That Sri Sankara gave the highest place to Bhakti will be evident from his praise of Saint Kannappar and Saint Sambandar who established Bhakti as the Tiru-neri.

Sri Sankara reconciled the highest truths of metaphysics with the ideals of practical religion and maintained the ethos of Hinduism at a time when it was assailed by the Mimamsakas and Bauddhas, and innumerable cults were rearing their head. Homage to Sri Sankara for exalting our ancient faith to a new height of glory !

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SAIVISM

By

R. NAGASWAMY

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Siva' stands for 'the auspicious'. Saivism or Saivam stands for the school of thought which adores the Auspicious Being known to Man. The study of Saivism is a very fascinating field of enquiry, with its roots in the pre-Aryan civilization of India, that developed into a mighty tree with various branches and off-shoots. From Kashmir in the North to Ceylon in the South, from Afghanistan in the West to far off countries like Sumatra, Java, Cambodia in the East, Saivism was a dominant religion in the first twelve hundred years of the Christian era. It has given rise to noble expressions in the fields of art and literature. Even to this date, it is an important guiding principle in the lives of millions of Hindus.

PASUPATI

One of the most important traits of 'Siva' is his aspect of Pasupati, the Lord of sentient beings. He is also called Bhutapati, the Lord of the earth. The worship of Siva as Pasupati is traced to the Harappan civilization, where Siva is shown in a seal surrounded by animals. Unfortunately the question who the Harappans were has eluded all attempts at solution. They are however considered a pre-Aryan people probably representing the proto-Tamils. Saivism has been the main religion of the Tamils from time immemorial and so the suggestion that the worship of Pasupati by Harappans proves proto-Tamil traits may be accepted till proofs are adduced to the contrary.

VEDIC RUDRA

Siva Pasupati is identified with the Rudra of the Vedic age. The assimilation of the traits of one deity with those of another was quite common in Vedic period. The identification of Pasupati, a pre-Aryan God with Rudra of the Vedic age, was complete even before the Samhita period.

Rudra is regarded as the storm God, not the pure and simple but its baleful side in the destructive agency of lightning. Three hymns in the Rg Veda attributed to Kanva Gaurava, Kutsa Angirasa, and Gritsamada are in praise of Rudra. In one hymn he is associated with Soma. Most of the attributes of Rudra given in Vedic hymns formed the basis for the benevolent and the malevolent (anugraha and samhara) exploits of Siva found celebrated in later Puranas.

"O Rudra, in beauty thou art the most beautiful of all that exists" says a vedic stanza. He shines like the brilliant sun, like gold. He is thousand eyed—Sahasraksha and blue necked—Nilakantha. Rudra is clothed in skin and lives on mountains (Girisa). The Rg Veda mentions the thunderbolt as his weapon. He is armed with bow and arrow which are strong and swift. Rudra is young and unageing. He is the Lord of the world, Isaana and the father of the universe. He makes streams flow over the earth and

moistens everything. He is intelligent, wise and beneficent. Rudra is several times called bountiful. In the later Samhitas, the superlative of this word is used only in connection with Rudra.

Malevolence is also attributed to Rudra, who according to the Rg Veda, is fierce and destructive like a terrible beast. He is the ruddy boar of the heaven. Rudra is invoked not to assail his worshippers with celestial fire and not to cause lightning to descend. Elsewhere he is even said to assail with fever, cough, and poison. Rudra's howling dogs who swallow their prey unchewed are also spoken of. His hosts which attack men and beasts with disease and death receive the bloody entrails of the victim just as blood is poured out to demons as their peculiar share of the sacrifice.

Rudra's healing powers are mentioned frequently. He has a thousand remedies; by his auspicious remedies his worshipper hopes to live a hundred winters. He is besought to remove sickness from his worshippers' offspring and to be favourable to man and beast.

Rudra is referred to as Tryambaka, *i.e.*, he has three mothers. Ambika is first mentioned as Rudra's sister but later she is spoken of as his wife. The Maruts are spoken of as his sons. Rudra is identified with Agni. The *Vajasaneyasamhita* refers to him as Agni, Asani, Pasupati, Bhava, Soma, Isaana and Mahadeva. This identification gave rise to the Lingodhbhava form of later mythology. It may be seen that various forms of Siva like Bhikshatana, Gangadhara, Kalakala, Bhairava, Virabhadra, Kirata and others are traceable to His Vedic attributes.

SIVALINGA

Though in later times we find the various aspects of Siva being praised he is worshipped mainly in the form of a Sivalinga. Two opposing schools of interpretations vie with each other in tracing the origin of linga worship. One is the critical western view propounded by Marshall, Macdonell and others who trace linga worship to the phallic cult. The other school stoutly refuting this suggestion is headed by th traditional scholars of India.

THE PHALLUS

The protagonists of the phallic cult have the following in support of their view. In the Harappan sites, some objects resembling a phallus were found which were considered by Marshall as cult objects worshipped as lingas. Marshall came to the conclusion that linga worship was prevalent among the Harappans. A few passages in Mahabharata (Anusasana Parva) prove that the linga was identified with the phallus. A linga worshipped in Gudimallam exactly resembles a male organ. A passage in the Rg Veda referring to Sisnadeva is also shown as pointing to the cult of phallus worship. According to it Indra is implored to repel the hostile beings and not to allow the Sisnadevas (*i.e.* whose God is sisna or phallus) to approach the sacrifice. Indra is further praised as having slain the Sisnadevas and conquered by his craft the riches of their city with a hundred gates. From the above it is concluded that linga worship had its origin in phallic cult.

The antagonists of the view hold that the term Sisnadeva does not refer to those who worship the phallus, but to those who sport with sisna *i.e.*, unchaste man. Such an interpretation has been given by early scholars like the celebrated Vedic commentators Yaska, Sayana and others. There are hundreds of passages, giving the traditional interpretation of linga worship, in which the term linga is used in a different sense.

A careful study of both the views is necessary to understand the real import. That the term Sisnadeva stands for men who led a licentious life, as suggested by Yaska, must be accepted, as otherwise the main import of the hymn will be lost. For example the term Panditaputra is used to denote a fool and not a son of the pandit which is its etymological meaning.

We have seen that Rudra, and Pasupati were identical in the Rg Vedic period and hence the worshippers of Pasupati or Rudra were the Saivas. If the Sisnadevas were really worshippers of the Phallus, and the phallic emblem stood for Pasupati, they could not have been considered aliens to Vedic race and the very invocation to Indra to keep them away from sacrifice would have been meaningless. So the interpretation that the Sisnadevas were worshippers of the phallus, symbol of Siva, will come in for serious challenge. Even if the Sisnadevas are considered worshippers of the phallus, they were totally different from the worshippers of Rudra Pasupati.

LINGA A SHAFT OF FIRE

The origin of the linga cult must be traced to the worship of Agni as a shaft of fire which gave rise to the Lingodhbhava episode of later mythology. This arose due to the identification of Agni with Rudra. Rudra's shaft of lightning should also have contributed to this idea. The linga worshipped as Siva consists of three parts standing for Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, the whole being a symbolic representation of Sadasiva. The view that linga worship arose from the adoration of the sacrificial fire seems to be well founded. The worship of Rudra Pasupati took strong roots and grew steadily with various schools coming into existence.

While this is conceded, there seemed to have flourished a separate school which worshipped the phallus as the generative principle of earth. They were not originally worshippers of Siva but were strongly influenced by the worshippers of Mother Goddess, who worshipped the Yoni or the female organ. When the worship of Rudra Siva, became the dominating religion pushing to the background even the mighty Indra, Agni and other Gods of Vedic age, the phallus and the Yoni worshippers also fell in line and claimed themselves to be worshippers of Pasupati and Ambika. Thus they formed a separate school of Siva worshippers who were not assimilated till the end, but were always held falling outside the fold of pure Saivas. At any rate their presence and the development of a philosophy of their own cannot be denied, which gave rise to some of the statements given earlier in favour of the phallic origin of linga worship and to lingas like the one at Gudimallam.

In the northern part of India a number of sculptures of Siva, including representations of Lakulisa, show the membrum virile erect, which proves the influence of the phallic cult over Saivas, but this cult did not exert any influence in Tamilnad proper, as seen from the fact that none of the sculptures dating from the Pallava period to the present times showing this trait.

SCHOOLS OF SAIVISM

Many schools of Saivism seem to have existed even in the pre-Mauryan era. Panini in his Sutra refers to a sect called Ayahsulikas who according to Patanjali, were a sect of Siva Bhagavatas who carried an iron spike. The various schools of Siva worshippers were generally called Saivas. The term Pasupata is also used to denote all types of Saivas, though it stands for a separate school as well. One of the oldest, well established and still flourishing school of Saivism is the Siddhanta Saivam of Tamilnad. A number of treatises of this school has survived both in Tamil and Sanskrit. The exponents of this school have classified the various systems of Indian philosophies into two categories, as Saivite and non-Saivite systems. They were also called the internal systems which accept the authority of Siva Aagamas and the external systems which do not concede the authority of the Siva Aagamas. The non-Saivite schools are again subdivided into two categories as Vaidika accepting the authority of the Vedas and Avaidika, not accepting the authority of the Vedas.

Those who accept the authority of the Vedas are :-

1. Nyaya-Vaiseshikas.
2. Purva mimamsakas.
3. Uttara Mimamsakas (Vedantins)
4. Sankhyas.
5. Yogavadins, and
6. Pancharatrins. (Vaishnavites)

Those who do not accept the authority of the Vedas are :

1. Bauddhas.
2. Jainas, and
3. Lokayatas.

The various Saivite schools are also brought under two categories as those who follow the violent or wild methods called Raudra, and those who follow the benign schools as Saumya margas.

RAUDRA SCHOOLS

The Raudra or violent sects are the following :—

1. Vamam.
2. Bhairavam.
3. Mahavratam.
4. Kalamukam.
5. Kapalikam and
6. Pasupatam.

We may term the above schools the non-vegetarian sects who ate meat and took to drink.

SAUMYA SCHOOLS

The followers of the Saumya sects were pure vegetarians. They also had some

internal divisions mainly based on the interpretation of some philosophic thoughts. The divisions of the Saumya sect are :—

1. Aikyavada.
2. Pashana vada.
3. Bheda vada.
4. Sama vada.
5. Sankranti vada.
6. Avikara vada.
7. Parinama vada.
8. Siddhanta vada.

The Saumya Saivas are also called Suddha Saivas.

The followers of various Saiva sects and their doctrines may now be briefly noticed.

I. VAMA SECT

The followers of Vama school are the Saktas, the worshippers of Mother Goddess. They base their doctrines on such texts as Vama tantra and Sakta tantra. A text called Mulavatara tantra is mentioned as the treatise of the Vama school. To the same school belong the Yamala tantra which probably laid stress on the Yogini cult and the Mati tantra, which emphasised the worship of Saptamatas (Seven mothers). The Vama school believes in the supremacy of Sakti, who is said to pervade the entire universe. Even the term Siva, according to them, denotes Sakti. Just as Surya does not exist without its radiance, so also Siva has no existence without Sakti.

This Vama school had many sub-divisions.

(*a*) *Mantra Vamis*:—Those who believed in realisation through *mantropasana i.e.*, utterring mantras. (*b*) *Yantravami* : those who believed in the attainment of mystic powers like Anima, Mahima etc., by adoring Yantras,*i.e.*, metal plates with mystic diagrams and letters. (*c*) *Aushada vami* those who believed in taking recourse to medicines like Kayakalpa etc., for emancipation. (*d*) *Karmavadi vami* : who believed in doing what they thought was right. (*e*) *Advaita vama* school: According to this school the entire universe is the apparent manifestation of Sakti. By the knowledge of this all pervading energy final emancipation is reached. Great emphasis is laid on Jnana in this school: (*f*) *Dvaita vama* : those who believe in the triple concept Pasu, Pasa and Sakti (substitute for Pati). Because of Mala, the individual is in bondage ; by Saktadiksha, worshipping Sakti in various forms, and following the teachers in the footsteps of charya, kriya, jnana and yoga, moksha is attained. At the time of emancipation the devotee lives by the side of Sakti. (This sect is almost a counterpart of the Siddhanta Saivam and Vaishnavism). (*g*) *Misravadi vami* : By offering drinks and meat they worship Sakti either by puja, homa, japa or dhyana. The followers of this school believe that the soul merges with Sakti at the time of emancipation. (*h*) *The Siddhanta vami* : who believe in the triple concepts Sakti, Pasu and Pasa, and follow the eight aagamas like the Vama Aagama. By Saktinipata and Sambhava diksha (initiation) they attain emancipation.

The followers of Vama school in general wore shell and bone ornaments, took intoxicant drinks, ate non-vegetarian food, and carried in their person the trident, Kapala and Katvanga.

II. BHAIRAVA SECT

The followers of the Bhairava school believe in the Supremacy of Lord Bhairava. They follow the text called Svacchanda Bhairava tantra and other aagamas, which were quite popular in Kashmir. This school was also known as Trika or Dakshina school, which is said to have been expounded by Lord Bhairava himself in the form of Svacchanda Bhairava and hence the name. Svacchanda Bhairava, with eighteen arms is worshipped as the Supreme Deity and so also his consort, Bhairavi. The Bhairava school has detailed treatises and is perhaps one of the elaborate schools of Saivism.

Some of the followers of Bhairava sect took special initiation and repeating the mantra, qualified to attain mystic powers. There were others who did worldly deeds (ishta and purta) like erecting temples, excavating tanks etc. Those who were initiated into the mysteries of Bhairava schools were asked to maintain secrecy. The terrific aspect of this school is brought out from the fact that they were asked to repeat the mantra ten million times and asked to offer innumerable human sacrifices on the banks of rivers.

The followers of Bhairava sect wore shell earlobes, dear skin, trident, and damaruka (little drum) as symbols. This despicable sect must be traced to tribal customs and tribal instincts. One of the sub-schools of this sect was called Kaula, said to have been propounded by Matsyendranath Goraksha-

natha, Adinatha, Virupaksha, Matsyendranath, Nagarjuna, Meghanatha and others, who are said to have been the preceptors and Siddhas of this school.

III. KALAMUKHA SECT

This school believes in the supremacy of Rudra and not Bhairava. They wear crystal earlobes, anoint their body with sandal, and worship Pasupati. They also believe in Pati, Pasu and Pasa. According to this doctrine nothing could exist without Rudra. The same lord takes other forms like Dakshinamurti. In order to cut asunder the pasabandha, Siva is worshipped in somavara, (Monday), ashtami, chaturdasi, Sivaratri and other vratas. By Saktinipata, the soul becomes free. The soul shines like a star while Siva shines like the sun. The union of Siva and the soul is called Paramoksha, *i.e.*, the final emancipation. This school is identical with Somasaivam or the Soma Siddhanta.

IV. KAPALIKA SECT

The Kapalikas accept a part of the Siddhanta of the Kalamukha and base their doctrine on Kapala tantra. As Siva dances in the cremation ground at the time of destruction, the Kapalikas imagine themselves as Siva and dance in the cemetery, singing Samagana. Later with a human skull in their hand they go begging for food. According to them the dancing Siva is the supreme Sadasiva. Souls which are but pure consciousness are many. The Kapalikas take initiation, do daily rites, take severe vows and being indifferent to praise and blame beg their food and attain release by rising equal to Siva.

V. MAHAVRATA SECT

The 'Sarvasiddhanta Viveka' treats even Lakula as a branch of the Kapalika school. In this school also, Siva as Pasupati is the Supreme Lord who dances in the cemtery at the time of destruction. Siva is the embodiment of knowledge and action, Jnana and Kriya ; the bondage is due to Karma maya and not due to anava maya. On account of Saktipata and initiation and practice of charya and kriya, final emancipation is reached. Release is attained just by wearing the linga and not necessarily puja. A Mahavratin carries a linga on his head, neck, chest or other part of the body above the navel, and pays equal devotion to Siva, Guru and Jangama. Kundika, Kundala, snake, Sikkamani, and Upavita made of hair are spoken of as the symbols of a Mahavratin. The Mahavratins lay great stress on Vidya.

The Siddhanta Samucchaya seems to identify the Mahavratins with the Lakula sect, while the other texts do not admit this identification. It may also be mentioned, that carrying a linga on one's person is spoken here as the custom of Mahavratin. The same is also mentioned for the Vira Saiva sect which is identified with the dakshina suddha saiva school. These schools must be considered identical in their earlier period which got ramified in course of time. All these schools may probably be traced to the Lakulisa cult.

The Lakula cult was originated by Lakulisa, at Kayavarohana (Karona of Tamil literature) identified with Karvan in Baroda State. Lakulisa is said to have preached his first sermon at Ujjain and is assigned to 1st century A.D.

VI. PASUPATA SECT

The Pasupata sect had two sub-divisions, namely the Vaidika and Avaidika sects. (*a*) The Avaidika Pasupatas, also called asrauta Pasupatas, had a number of Agamas of their own like Prajapatya, Pasupata, Padma samhita, Vasishta, Kasyapa, Varaha and other treatises.

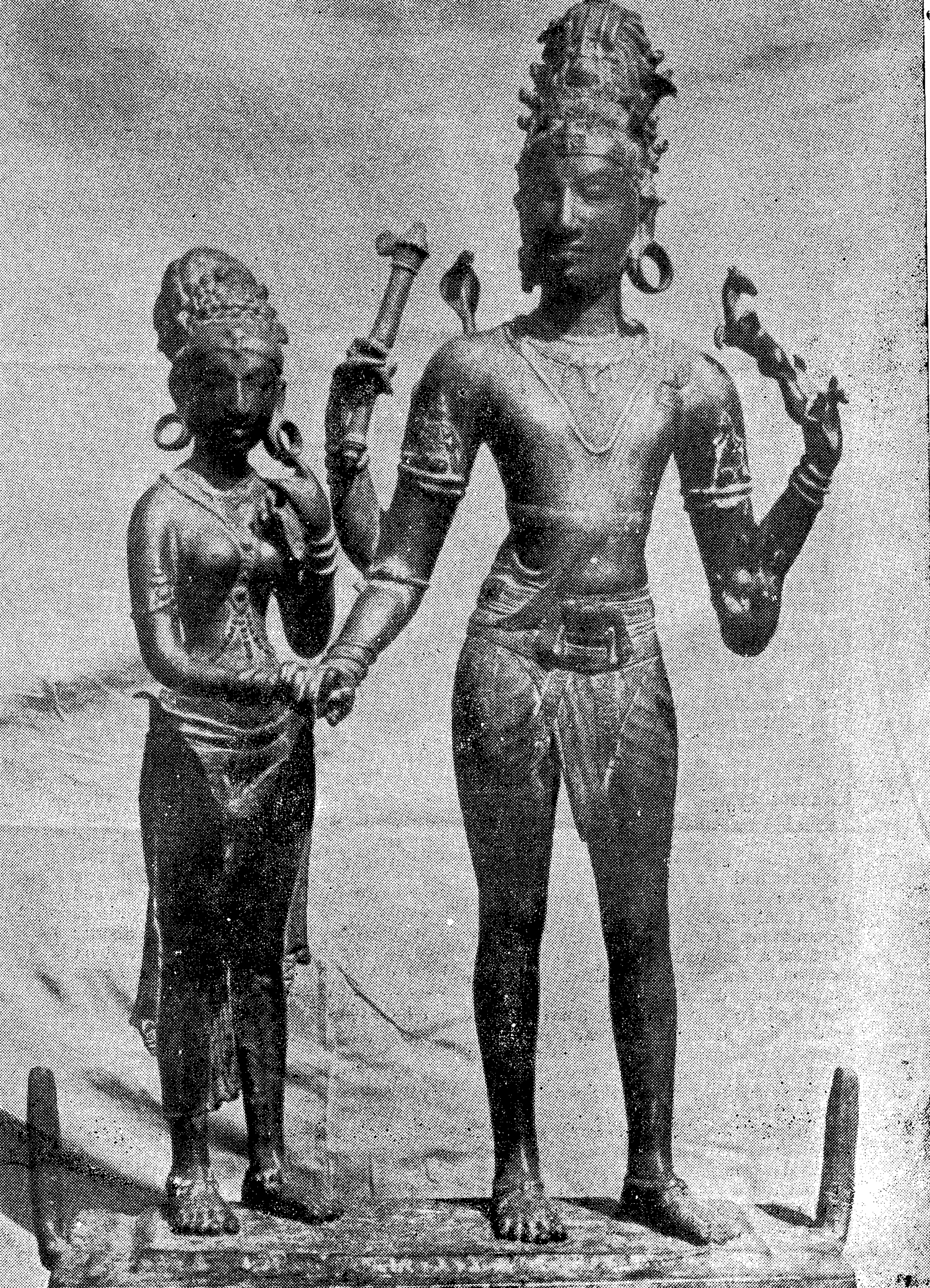
The Pasupatas do not accept Mala other than Maya. The individual souls were considered Omniscient but were bound by Maya and Karma. The followers take Pasupata Siva diksha, and following in the footsteps of charya and jnana attain release, that is equality with Siva.

Sacred ash, skin, uttariya, vishtara, pustaka and Kaupina are the symbols of Pasupata. Great emphasis is laid in this school on good companionship.

(*b*) *Vaidika Pasupata*: This school traces its origin to Atharvasira upanishad. This is said to have been taught by Srikanta to others. Four disciples are mentioned as Ruru, Dadhici, Agastya and Upamanya. Three principles accepted in this school are kshara, akshara and ksharakshara. Kshara is prakriti, akshara is purusha and ksharakshara is Isvara. Maya is considered Prakriti ; bondage is due to Maya ; sambandha (connection) is by Mala and Karma. Punya and Papa are accumulated due to ajnana. This entire system is based on the Vedantic doctrine, where great emphasis is laid on the Guru-Sishya Bhava

VII. DAKSHINA SUDDHA SAIVAS

The pure righteous Saiva sect is considered a separate sect of the Vama school, as it



bases its conclusion on the agamas like Mulavatara tantra. It is also called the Sakti Sambhava school, a benign (Saumya) sect and not the Raudra one. The school is called the righteous school (dakshina) as it followed the Vedic doctrines. There were various schools in this sect. The pure Saivas wear matted or long hair and wearing sacred ash and rudraksha beads, do puja to Siva. Rudraksha, upavita, ushnisha, uttariya and the sacred ash are considered the five symbols of Suddha Saivas.

This school seems to have given rise to the Virasaiva sect, established by Basavesvara. According to this school their doctrine is said to have been taught to Basava by Prabhudeva.

VIII. SIDDHANTA SAIVAM

The Saiva Siddhanta or the agamanta Saivam is the most popular school in Tamilnad.

The followers of Saiva Siddhanta accept the validity of both the Karma Kanda and Jnana Kanda of the Vedas. However as the Jnana Kanda (Vedanta) is considered the culmination of all knowledge which leads to the final emancipation, it has exerted greater influence on the Saiva Siddhanta doctrine. Even the Saiva Siddhanta is itself classified as Karmaanta and Jnanaanta by some. As the validity of the Vedas is accepted, so also the Saiva agamas are held equally valid in this school. It accepts the triple concepts of Pati, Pasu and Pasa. The Samhara Karana, *i.e.*, the cause of destruction, is Pati, the Lord of the Universe, who is none other than Sadasiva. The Supreme Lord and his manifestation, Sakti, are the mother and father (Ammai and Appar) of the Universe. The Supreme Lord is Omnipresent and Ommipotent and Omniscient. Pasu and Pasa are beginningless but are in bondage owing to the association of Anava, Maya and Karma, which are considered the triple *malas*. Pasa does not bind the supreme deity. Since the individual soul identifies itself with the senses (*pancha indriyas*), it is unable to realise its true nature. If the attachment to the senses is removed, the real nature of the self would be revealed. Knowledge dawns on soul by tapas. The Supreme Lord manifests himself as the teacher of the soul. The individual soul can perceive the Supreme only through His grace. Once the *pasa* is removed the soul can perceive the Supreme. The *Vasanamala* is removed by chanting the five sacred letters (*panchakshara*) of Siva. By devoting all actions to the Lord, worshipping the Sivalinga and Sivajnaanins as Siva Himself, and thereby removing the triple malas, one is emancipated. The final release is the unity of the individual soul with the Supreme. Besides creation, sustenance and destruction, the Supreme acts in two more ways, namely *tirodhana i.e.*, concealing, and *anuragha i.e.*, bestowing grace. These five acts are celebrated as the Panchakrityas which are given visual representation in the celebrated dancing form of Siva Nataraja.

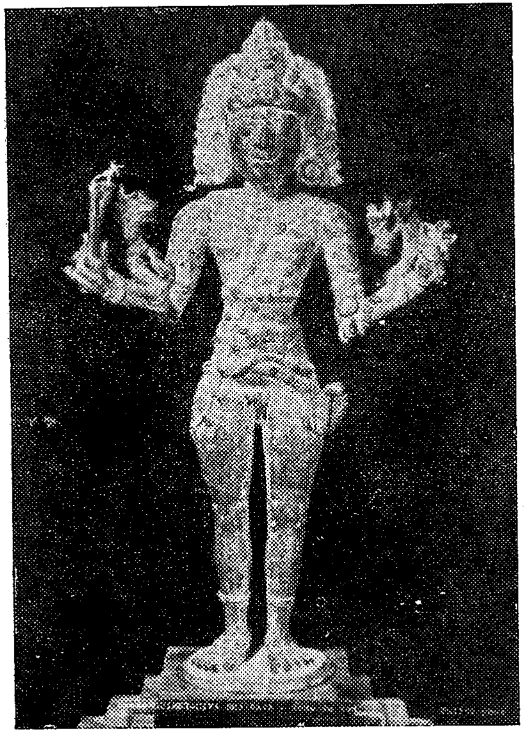
SIVA-AGAMAS

There are 28 main treatises called agamas that deal with the worship of Siva. In the present state of preservation, it is difficult to say which of them is early and has preserved its true character as they seem to carry many interpolations. But all of them assign the first position to Kamikagama, which may accepted as the earliest. According to this Agama, the terms Agama, Tantra, Mantra and Siddhanta are synonyms. Of these 28 agamas, the first ten are called Siva (auspicious) agamas and the remaining are called Rudra agamas. These agamas are generally divided into four sections as Charya, Kriya, Yoga and Jnana. These treatises give a brief account of creation; the layout of villages, cities, forts etc.; construction of residences and temples; iconographic details of various deities; nitya, naimittika and kamya modes of worship in temples; the initiation and other connected rites, relating to the worshippers and the ultimate end and realisation of the Supreme. It may be seen that these were elaborate, comprehensive and voluminous texts of the Saiva school, so elaborate that they contained information relating to various professions like potters, architects etc. Shorter treatises, on temple rituals alone, based on these agamas were composed. These texts were called the Paddhatis.

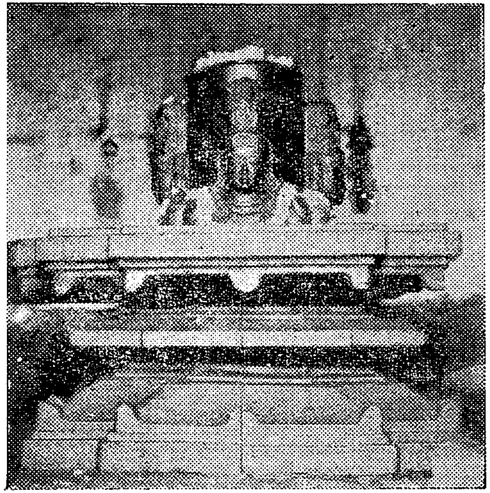
PADDHATIS

A good number of Paddhatis were written by eminent Saivite teachers, especially during the rule of the imperial Cholas. We have a list of eighteen authors of Paddhatis.

1. Ugrajyoti.
2. Satyajyoti.
3. Ramakanta.
4. Vidyakanta.
5. Narayanakanta.
6. Vibhutikanta.



Left: Bhairava Bronze (11th Cent. A.D.)
Musee Guismet, Paris
Centre: Chaturmukha Tryambaka
(Kalahasti)
Right: Another Chaturmukha Linga
From Kanauj (9th Cent. A.D.)



7. Srikanta.
8. Nilakanta.
9. Somasambhu.
10. Isaana Sambhu.
11. Hrdaya Siva.
12. Brahma Sambhu.
13. Vairagya Siva.
14. Jnaana Sambhu.
15. Trilochana Siva.
16. Vama Siva.
17. Isvara Siva.
18. Aghora Siva.

Besides the above the following five teachers are also said to have composed paddhatis.

1. Sarvatma Siva.
2. Sarvesa Siva.
3. Vyapaka Siva.
4. Vyoma Siva
5. Uttunga Siva.

Of the above, the paddhati by Aghorasiva was very popular. This great Acharya wrote in 1158 A.D., and is said to have belonged to the *Dvilakshadhyayi santana.* The work of one Somasambhu was influential, earlier than Aghora Siva's Paddhati. Somasambhu is said to have composed his work between 1075 to 1095 A.D. Another teacher, Isaana Siva was a Rajaguru to the Chola Emperor Kulottunga III. His Paddhati has however not been traced.

DEVARAM HYMNS

While these agamas, followed by the Padhatis, catered mainly to the ritual side of the Siddhanta Saivas, the devotional hymns of the Nayanmars like Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar and Manikkavachakar kept the torch of Saivism glowing. The bhakti movement which was in an efflorescent stage from 600 A. D. contributed to the supremacy of the Siddhanta doctrine in Tamilnad. Appar refers to all the principal tenets of Siddhanta School in his hymns. In an inscription at the Kailasanatha temple of Kanchi, the Pallava ruler Rajasimha (700-728 A.D.) states that he mastered various branches of Saiva Siddhanta and thereby cleansed himself of all malas. This is a direct reference to the existence of Saiva Siddhanta with a number of branches, as early as 700 A.D. This also proves that a number of texts on the Siddhanta school should have flourished during this period. This is amply proved by the Tamil work *Tirumandiram* of Thirumular who has outlined the Siddhanta school in mystic poetry.

MEYKANDA SASTRA

The 12th, 13th and 14th centuries after the Christian era witnessed the flowering of the most important Siddhanta school, headed by Meykandadeva. Meykandar, a great teacher of the 13th century A.D., has compiled a work called *Sivajnanabhodham* in Tamil, in which the Siddhanta doctrine is detailed cryptically in twelve sutras. A commentary on this called " Sivajnaana Siddhi " by Arulnandi Siva is an exhaustive treatise on this subject. There are altogether fourteen works belonging to this group, which go by the name "Meykanda Sastra." Other great teachers included in this school are Umapatisivam, Thirukkadavur Uyyavanta Nayanar and others. The Agama and Paddhati works, the hymns of Saivite Nayanmars, and the Meykanda Sastra, constitute the Siddhanta school of South India.

DAKSHINAMURTI

(SIVA AS GURU)

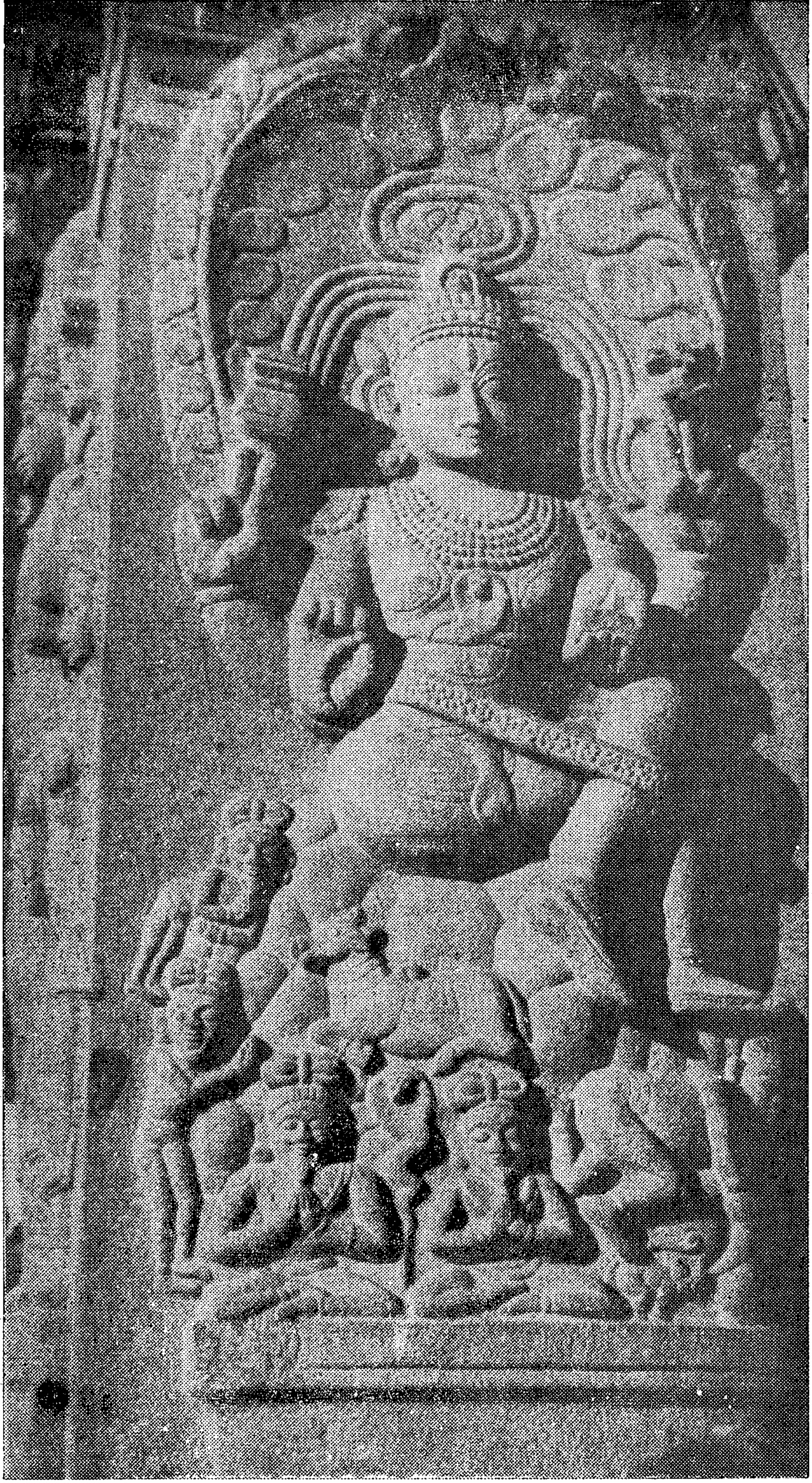
चित्रं वटतरोर्मूले वृद्धाः शिष्या गुरुर्युवा ।
गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तु छिन्न संशयाः ॥

Behold that wonder under the banyan tree ! The disciples are aged ; the Teacher (Guru) is a youth ! What is more, the Teacher is teaching through silence and the disciples are cleared of all their doubts !

This is the picture of Sri Dakshinamoorti portrayed in the above verse. Dakshinamoorti is a youthful person, filled with peace and radiating peace, wearing a cresent moon on the matlock, and with four aged Rishis, reduced to skin and bones by their penance, near His feet. He is the embodiment of the Supreme Bliss that results from perfect peace. The luxuriant growth of the matlock indicates agelessness, and the crescent moon, progressively growing jnana (wisdom). The youthful appearance is symbolic of the fullness of Isvara. It is only when something is wanting that the mind gets agitated for acquiring that something and when the mind gets agitated, the body ages. Dakshinamurti represents the Ultimate Reality, full with bliss, not limited by time, space or matter, and not bound by wants or desires. He is All and there is nothing above Him or below Him.

The Rishis at the feet of Dakshinamoorti are persons in quest of the Ultimate Reality. As a result of their penance or tapas *for ages, they get the vision of this embodiment of peace and bliss. The peace radiating from Him pervades them and they also attain the Supreme Bliss, the goal of their quest. Thus, this youthful Teacher, Dakshinamurti, teaches by His very silence and the aged Rishis have no more doubts in their minds, because they have attained that state of bliss, where there is no room for any doubt. Dakshinamurti is depicted as showing the* mudra *or sign of Oneness, by bringing the tip of the thumb (Supreme Brahman) and the tip of the index finger (indivdual soul) of the right hand to meet. This* mudra *of the hand is the automatic expression of the spirit which Dakshinamurti symbolises.*

H.H. SRI SANKARACHARYA OF KANCHI



Dakshinamurti (Kanchi Ekamranatha Temple)

THE GOD OF WISDOM

By

SENGALIPURAM ANANTARAMA DIKSHITAR

While circumambulating the *sanctum sanctorum* of Siva, we will find in the *prakara*, a still, serene, smiling Murti facing South. At the very sight of Him, our sorrows are assuaged. The great ones initiated into the 5-syllabled *panchakshari-mantra* of Siva sit in His presence and repeat the sacred formula.

This Murti facing South is Dakshinamurti. He is Siva, as the Silent Youth of Wisdom.

Why does He face the South ? South is the direction in which Yama, the God of Death, resides. Dakshinamurti faces this direction to keep Yama off His devotees, on whom He confers immortality. Men attain the immortal state if they get rid of nescience and realize their identity with the Absolute. That is why Dakshinamurti is depicted as trampling upon *Apasmara* by His right foot.

'*Apasmara*' also means 'the falling sickness.' By worshipping Dakshinamurti the epileptic is cured of this disease. There is a particular formula called *Apasmarahara Dakshinamurti mantra*. Oblations of ghee, etc. are offered in the fire to the chant of this *mantra*, in order to cure one of epilepsy.

As Dakshinamurti is pre-eminently the bestower of enlightenment, He is called the great Preceptor or Guru,. 'Gu' means 'darkness' ; 'ru' signifies annulment. Dakshinamurti dispels internal darkness. The light of wisdom beams forth in His smile.

Dakshinamurti holds his right hand aloft in the 'chin-mudra' posture. 'Chit' is Knowledge ; 'mudra' is sign. Knowledge also includes within itself Truth and Bliss. So the 'chin-mudra' signifies *Sat-Chit-Ananda*—Truth-Knowledge-Bliss. In the 'chin-mudra' sign, the thumb and the forefinger are bent so that their tips touch each other. The thumb stands for the Supreme Soul. The Upanishads speak of the Supreme Soul as residing in the human heart as an effulgence of the size of the thumb. The sanskrit word for thumb, *angushta* is in the masculine gender. The forefinger is *tarjani*, which is feminine gender. The forefinger signifies the individual soul. Like the wife uniting with her lord, this individual soul unites with the Supreme Soul in the 'chin-mudra.' It is not just union. It is identity. The other three fingers stand apart, denoting that only when the individual soul keeps away from the three qualities of **sattva* (Virtuousness), *rajas* (Dynamism) and *tamas* (Inertness) he can realize his oneness with the Supreme.

Appaya Dikshitar extols Dakshinamurti saying, 'I install Siva in my thoughts ; Siva, a drop of whose Grace conferred the status of Guru on Narayana, Brahma, Upamanyu, Surya, Subrahmanya, Indra, Nandi and others ; Siva, the Original Guru of capitvating

* *Sattva* (Virtuousness) too is an impediment to final realisation, if one is consciously practising it, and it has not become a natural adjunct of him.

form, bejewelled with gentle smile, His lotus hand holding the Chin-mudra.'

श्रीकान्तद्रुहिणोपमन्युतपनस्कन्देन्द्रनन्द्यादयः
प्राचीना गुरवोपि यस्य करुणालेशाद्गता गौरवम् ।
तं सर्वादिगुरुं मनोज्ञवपुषं मन्दस्मितालङ्कृतं
चिन्मुद्राकृतमुद्रपाणिनलिनं चित्ते शिवं कुर्महे ॥

The great Shri Sadasiva Brahman prays:

वटतरुनिकटनिवासं
पटुतरविज्ञानमुद्रितकराब्जम् ।
कञ्चन देशिकमाद्यं
कैवल्यानन्दकन्दमवलम्बे ॥

I take refuge in the Guru, seated beneath the banyan tree, Whose lotus hand bears the sign of Supreme Wisdom, Who is the root-cause of the Bliss of Liberation and Who is beyond description.

Dakshinamurti is extolled in the following Upanishad Vakya too :

अजात इत्येव कश्चिद् भीरुः प्रपद्यते ।
रुद्र यत्ते दक्षिणं मुखं तेन मां पाहि नित्यम् ॥

This *mantra* says that the mortal who is afraid of births and deaths must take refuge in the birthless Rudra (Siva), and pray to Him to protect him constantly with His south-facing countenance.

The following again is a prayer for protection by the One holding the Chin-mudra.

अङ्गुष्ठतर्जनीयोगमुद्राव्याजेन देहिनाम् ।
श्रुत्यर्थं ब्रह्मजीवैक्यं दर्शयन्नोवतात् शिवः ॥

Let Shri Siva, Who through the device of the *mudra* joining the thumb and fore-finger reveals the Oneness of Brahman and *jiva*, which is the purport of the Vedas, protect us.

वटविटपिसमीपे भूमिभागे निषण्णम्
सकलमुनिजनानां ज्ञानदातारमारात् ।
त्रिभुवनगुरुमीशं दक्षिणामूर्तिदेवं
जननमरणदुःखच्छेददक्षं नमामि ॥

The *sloka* visualises before us the Guru of the three worlds sitting beneath the banyan tree in Kailas, and conferring enlightenment on all the saints and sages around Him, by His very silence. It conveys the salutations of the devotee to the divine form of Dakshinamurti, who excels in dispelling the sorrow of transmigration.

Yet another *sloka*—usually recited as a prologue to Shri Sankara Bhagavadpada's hymn on Shri Dakshinamurti :

मौनव्याख्याप्रकटितपरब्रह्मतत्त्वं युवानं
वर्षिष्ठान्तेवसदृषिगणैरावृतं ब्रह्मनिष्ठैः ।
आचार्येन्द्रं करकलितचिन्मुद्रमानन्दरूपं
स्वात्मारामं मुदितवदनं दक्षिणामूर्तिमीडे ॥

The *sloka* is pregnant with meaning. It says that the youthful Dakshinamurti proclaims the truth of the Supreme Brahman by His silence. The host of rishis deeply meditating upon Brahman are sitting around Him as disciples. He is the Prince among Preceptors. His is the very form of Bliss as He is enjoying the essence of Self, which experience is radiated in the smile on His face and in the *chin-mudra.*

As an epilogue to Shri Sankara's Dakshinamurti Hymn is recited the *sloka* underneath :

चित्रं वटतरोर्मूले वृद्धाश्शिष्या गुरुर्युवा ।
गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तु छिन्नसंशयाः ॥

The wonder under the banyan tree ! The pupils are old men and the Preceptor is a youth. The Preceptor lectures in the language of silence, and the pupils too are cleared of their doubts thereby.

Though the authorship of the *Dakshinamurti Ashtaka* is ascribed to Shri Sankaracharya, there is a different version also. It is said that Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada got two hymns from Kailas itself, the abode of Siva, and propagated them in this world. One is *Soundarya Lahari* and the other is the *Dakshinamurti Stotra* or *Ashtaka.* It is also believed that these two hymns are inscribed on the walls of the abode of Siva.

Every stanza of *Dakshinamurti Ashtaka* ends with the words :

तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

"This obeisance is offered to Sri Dakshinamurti, the Guru."

It is the custom to prostrate every time this foot is repeated during the recitation of the hymn. Even *sannyasins* recite this hymn everyday, and make obeisance at the end of each stanza.

Jagan-mithya-vada or the illusoriness of the world is emphasised in the very opening of this hymn. It also answers the criticism that, that which appears concretely cannot be false. We see distinctly the reflection of a

city in a mirror. For that reason can we say that the reflection has an independet existence of its own ? We see very clearly different objects in our dreams. For that reason can we say that they are all true ?

Something more of dreams. The eyes of the dreamer are shut in sleep. Yet he sees so many objects, because only when the objects are external they have to be comprehended by the eyes. But the dream-objects are all within the mind of the dreamer alone. Yet he feels as though they are external and as though he sees them with his eyes. Similarly, all this world is imagined within the Absolute Brahman, and yet seems to be outside of it and to have an independent reality of its own.

That Brahman is not different from the real 'I' of the individual soul. It is only to make one realize that Brahman enjoys Its own bliss of knowledge without any organs of perception that the individual soul is endowed with the dreaming faculty in which without any organs of senses, one enjoys 'objects' which again have no independent reality apart from that individual.

When the dreamer wakes up, all the objects of his dream are nowhere. And the dreamer alone remains. That Awakened Being is Dakshinamurti. All the objects of this world—which is made of nothing more than the stuff of dream—have vanished for Him, and He alone remains as the stainless *Self*. 'I bow to that Preceptor Dakshinamurti' says that opening *sloka* :

विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं
पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया।
यस्साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाद्वयं
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

On waking up, a man says : "I enjoyed good sleep. I did not know anything that happened then." His senses were all lulled and yet he says he enjoyed good sleep. Which is it that felt this joy, when even the senses were stilled ? He also says "*I* enjoyed good sleep", though during the sleep itself, he was not conscious of the usual 'I' identified with the body and senses. So there has been an Awareness Element (*Sakshin*) even in the sleep. The un-sleeping, un-dying Self's awareness has been there witnessing even the sleep. The enjoyment or joy is the nature of that Self alone. Any how, the sleeping man is not conscious of this joy of Self during the sleep ; he has only an inkling of it *after* the wakes up. He actually says : 'I did not know anything that happened during my sleep.' This 'not-knowing' is nescience. Here it is that sleep differs from *samadhi* in which also there is no sensory perception, but in which there is the full consciousness of realising the Bliss.

Just as the multitude of dream-objects vanish on waking up, so also the identification with body, senses, etc. vanishes on a person's getting enlightement. So long as one is not enlightened and remains in the darkness of nescience, he mistakes the body for the self, like mistaking the rope for a snake in darkness. When a lamp is brought, the rope is seen to be rope and the snake vanishes. So also enlightenment confers on him a knowledge of the Self and then the physical aspect vanishes. Even when one saw the snake, it was in reality a rope ; and on the rope he superimposed the snake. So also the Self is always there ; but only the individual soul is not aware of it, and superimposes physical aspects on it.

From childhood onwards the physical form and mental attitude of an individual are always changing. He is one thing in his sleep, a different thing in his waking moments. Yet with all these changes, he refers to an unchanging 'I' all the while. What is this 'I' that remains changeless amid all the multifarious external changes ? The *Ashtaka* says that Dakshinamurti is the embodiment of that 'I' as revealed in the auspicious *chin-mudra*, and offers salutations unto Him :

बाल्यादिष्वपि जाग्रदादिषु तथा सर्वास्ववस्थास्वपि
व्यावृत्तास्वनुवर्तमानमहमित्यन्तःस्फुरन्तं सदा।
स्वात्मानं प्रकटीकरोति भजतां यो मुद्रया भद्रया
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

By referring to the changes to the body right from childhood, this *sloka* emphasises the unreality of what *appears to be* the 'I'. Infancy, boyhood, youth, old age are all only external wrappings on the changeless soul. Whatever the external wrappings or trappings they do not touch the soul. A man smearing paints on him like a tiger cannot, for that reason, fight a bull. He is what he is. So is the nature of the Self never affected. This *sloka* also implicitly conveys the message that just as a man takes easily the physical and mental changes from

childhood onwards, and does not feel sorry for the withering away of earlier qualities, so also he should take the withering away of this body in death easily, because that is also only a part of the soul's voyage through changes. It implicitly echoes the *Gita* :

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

The realization of the immortality of the Self is stressed, which alone will dispel the mental agitations pertaining to the loss and gain of all that is transient and changing.

There are many *mantras* sacred to Dakshinamurti among which that of Medha Dakshinamurti is considered supreme. Apart from the spiritual bounties it bestows, this *mantra* shaipens the power of remembrance, scholarship and eloquence. It had been a hereditary property of the revered Shri Appaya Dikshitar's family. Mannargudi Shri Raju Sastrigal, who was a scion of that stock, repeated this *mantra* of 24 syllables (like Gayatri) 24 lakhs of time and attained excellence in it. My own grand father, Shri Vaidyanatha Dikshtar (popularly known as Shri Muthannaval) who performed the *Soma yaga*, attained excellence in this *mantra-japa*. This *mantra* is, to this date, one of our family treasures.

There is a shrine dedicated to Medha Dakshinamurti in Mayuram Vallalar Koil. Our Jagadguru of Shri Kamakoti Peetham has offered worship to this Murti, many a time. Shri Dharamapuram Adheena Karta is a performing *maha abhisheka* and *lakshar-chana* to this Murti on a grand scale annually, It is believed that this Dakshinamurti is like the life-root to the other images of Dakshniamurti.

In Kanjanur, ten miles from Vallalar Koil, are two images of Dakshnamurti in the southern *prakara* of the temple. A *darsan* of these Murtis is enough to get rid of mental tension. The Vaishnava Haradatta who belonged to this place, abandoned the hereditary adherence to Vaishnavism even in his boyhood, took to the symbols of Siva (like the sacred ashes and rudraksha) and did Siva-mantra-japa. His parents drove him out of the house. The boy Haradatta took refuge in the temple of Siva and slept in the *sannidhi* of Dakshinamurti. During that night, Dakshnamurti Himself had the boy invested with the sacred thread (*yajnopa-vita*) and initiated him into Gayatri. When the temple doors were opened the next morning, people were wonderstruck to see the boy with the sacred-thread performing the *sandhya* observance. Till that time there was only one image of Dakshinamurti there. But the one became two thereafter, to mark that great event.

Even to this day, dull-witted persons when initiated into the *mantra* of Medha Dakshi-namurti acquire sharp intellect. It is not even necessary that they should themselves repeat the *mantra.* It is enough if they hear others performing the *mantra japa*, and partake of the remnant of *havis* offered in the fire to propitiate Medha Dakshinamurti.

The " Sankara Vijayas " unequivocally say that it was this self-same Lord of Silence, Dakshinamurti, who incarnated as Shri Sankaracharya. When the people were not mature enough to understand His silence, Dakshinamurti broke this silence, came down to the earth as Shri Sankara and discussed and debated with the adherents of the different paths of philosophy and won them over to Advaita Vedanta.

Let me conclude with the prayer that Dakshinamurti bless us all with the Know-ledge of the Self.

SECTION III

SRI SANKARACHARYA

THE LIFE AND WORK OF SRI SANKARA

By

PROF. P. SANKARANARAYANAN

Among the renowned personalities celebrated in the hagiographies of the world, by far the most distinguished for all time is Sri Sankara, reverently referred to as Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada, or simply as the Bhagavatpada. Whether considered, as tradition and the *puranas* would have it, as an incarnation of Lord Siva Himself or only looked upon as a surpassing human being, either way, he is pre-eminent among the prophets and religious leaders of all times. His achievements during the little over three decades of his earthly life constitute a marvel of uncommon rate.

He was an intellectual prodigy who attained a phenomenal mastery over the scriptures even when he was less than eight years of age. Using the Sanskrit language with a felicitous clarity all his own, he wrote elaborate commentaries on the tripod of Hindu religion and philosophy evincing a dialectical skill which even to this day is the despair and envy of his adversaries. The original treatises that he produced on Advaita Vedanta ranging from a single verse to a thousand for all grades of mental comprehension live even to-day as fresh as ever, in the thoughts and tongues of men. His trimphal *digvijaya* to all parts of our land more than once had a double purpose, to vindicate the truths of Advaita Vedanta against the onslaughts of its disputants and to purify our religious theories and practices out of the accretions that had gathered round them by the lapse of time and the inroads of perverted minds. Mere sacerdotalism which went by the letter ignoring the spirit and the corruptions of designing people had for long fouled the clear springs of our pristine religion, resulting in the adoption of ways of worship which were neither civilised nor moral. All this had happened before Sri Sankara came on the scene. He accomplished the stupendous task of ridding our religion of its unfortunate excrescences and raised it to a pedestal of worshipful dignity. Buddhism, the rebel child of the Vedic religion and philosophy, denied God and the soul, laid the axe at the very roots of Vedic thought and posed a great danger to its very survival. This onslaught was stemmed betimes compelling Buddhism to seek refuge in other lands. While the credit for this should go primarily to the Mimamsaka Kumarila Bhatta, it was because of Sri Sankara's dialectical skill and irrefutable arguments that it ceased to have sway over the minds of the inheritors of Vedic religion.

Having thus enthroned our ancient religion and philosophy in the hearts and minds of his countrymen, Sri Sankara established in several parts of the country guardians of his teachings to preserve and propagate it to countless generations of the future. While these should have been numerous when he established them, five stand to this day as pontificates bearing his name, and function at Kanchi, Sringeri, Puri, Dwaraka and Badari, covering the whole of Bharata Varsha. There is not in legend or in history a life like Sri Sankara's; so short in years and yet so packed with achievements in the realm of the spirit and whose glory extends beyond the bounds of

space and time. No wonder that even today, much as protagonists of other schools may regret and protest, Vedanta is identified with Advaita which Sri Sankara drew out of the *Upanishads,* distilled out of the *Bhagavad Gita* and described in his commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras,* and that this school of Vedanta has compelled the conviction and obtained assent of the thinking minds of the West.

II

It is unfortunate that no biography of Sri Sankara was written by his contemporaries. For details about his life, we have to depend on *Sankara Vijayas* composed at different times long after he lived. They do not agree in all particulars about his life. The traditional date of Sri Sankara varies from that assigned to him by modern historians. While the latter fix him as having lived from 788 to 820 A.D., the tradition determined by the pontifical succession in the celebrated *pithas* that he established take him to a time long before the Christian era. Be that as it may, we may glean from the different biographies extant today a generally accepted account of his life and work.

It is agreed on all hands that Sri Sankara belonged to a Nambudiri Brahmana family of Kerala in the hamlet of Kaladi situated on the banks of the Churna river. His father was a pious wealthy person called Sivaguru and his mother was Aryamba. Not blessed with a son for a long time, the devout pair went to worship Lord Siva in the nearby celebrated temple at Trichur. The story goes that, pleased by their devotion, the God appeared before them in a dream and asked them to choose between a number of long-lived sons who would remain ignorant and stupid and one who would live for eight years only, but would be possessed of phenomenal intellectual gifts. Sivaguru and his wife had no hesitation in choosing the latter. According to the legend, it was conveyed to them that Lord Siva Himself would condescend to be born to them.

In fullness of time, Aryamba bore a child carrying such divine marks on its person that those who beheld it proclaimed it an incarnation of Lord Siva himself. It was given the significant name of Sankara, calculating by the season, the day and time of its birth and also as if to predict the great service the child was destined to render to the world. (*Sam Karoti iti Sankarah*: 'Sankara' is one who does good.) As ill-luck would have it, Siva-guru passed away before the child was many years old and it was then brought up with care and affection by his mother. With the assistance of her kinsmen, Aryamba got the *upanayanam* ceremony performed for her precocious boy who then mastered all the Vedas and sastras which seemed to wait on his lips, eager to be uttered by him for their own sanctification.

The eight years of the boy's allotted life were drawing to a close. The fateful day dawned. On that day it happened that Aryamba and Sri Sankara went to the Churna river to bathe. The mother finished her ablutions and was resting on the bank of the river. Suddenly she heard a cry of distress from her son telling her that a terrific crocodile had got his leg in its mouth and was eating him up. The agony of the mother was indescribable. Then Sri Sankara told her that he could free himself from the grip of the monster if, then and there, he assumed the *sannyasa asrama* bringing about thereby the 'death' of his former condition and the start of a new life. Else, the crocodile would devour him and, that would be the end of his physical life. 'Choose' said he, 'this instant; for there is no time to lose. Shall I pass away devoured by the crocodile or shall I live converting myself into a sannyasin?' Aryamba was in a dilemma; but her maternal instinct made her consent to Sri Sankara to live as a sannyasin if thereby she could keep him alive. Then and there, standing in the water, the boy Sankara uttered the incantation which automatically admitted him into the holy order of mendicant sannyasins. And, for a wonder, the crocodile loosed its grip and disappeared from water to appear again on the sky, so the story goes, as a celestial *gandharva* released from his erstwhile curse by which he was condemned to be an acquatic monster. Thus Sri Sankara 'died' as a Brahmachari at the

ordained age of eight and obtained a further lease of another eight years.

Upon Aryamba quite innocently bidding her son accompany her home, Sri Sankara reminded her that he had become a sannyasin, that he had betaken to an itenarant life and must take leave of her. The mother was anguished at this, grieving as to who could take care of her son. She wailed in disappointment that it was not given to her to see her son grow up, marry and raise a progeny for the continuation of his line. Sri Sankara consoled her by saying: 'Mother dear! Do not grieve. The whole world will be my home hereafter. All these who will initiate me into the sacred lore will be my fathers. All women who give me *bhiksha* (alms) will be my mothers. The peace that shall be mine by the realisation of the *atman* will be my consort. All my disciples will be my sons.' He however promised to be at her bedside in her last moments and speed her way to heaven by his presence.

Aryamba then gave him unwilling leave to depart. Sri Sankara travelled on foot from Kaladi to the Narmada banks visiting many a sacred spot on the way. There, in a place called Sankara Ganga*, he met Govinda Bhagavatpada who formally admitted him into the Sannyasin order according to the prescribed rituals and imparted the Brahma Vidya to him. After serving his guru, for some time, obeying his command, Sri Sankara went to Kasi (Banaras) and engaged himself in writing commentaries on the tripod of Hindu philosophy, namely, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Brahma Sutras.*

At this time an interesting incident happened in the life of Sri Sankara. One morning, he was returning to his monastery after a bath in the Ganga. Leading four dogs and accompanied by his wife, an outcaste who should not approach him came along. He was bidden by Sri Sankara to go away from his path. Upon this, the outcaste queried him as to what he bade to go away, if it was the outcaste's body or his *atman.* If it was the former, he said, it was compacted of the same five elements as Sri Sankara's own body and was not different. So it need not go away. If it was the *atman*, then according to the Advaita that Sri Sankara taught, the *atman* of all persons, Brahmana or outcaste was one only and, being identical and all-pervasive, it cannot move away. Sri Sankara immeiately understood that his questioner was no ordinary out-caste, but a realised soul and broke forth into a pentad of verses acclaiming the outcaste's greatness. Sri Sankara said in the verse that he deemed a person of such spiritual realisation to be his Guru, be he an out-caste or a Brahmana. According to the legend, it was Lord Siva Himself who appeared as this outcaste. The dogs were the four Vedas and the out-caste's wife was goddess Parvati Herself. The out-caste and his retinue vanished and Lord Siva appeared and blessed Sri Sankara exhorting him to finish writing his commentaries.

Another incident occurred some time later. While Sri Sankara was instructing his discipies in his Vedantic Commentaries, an aged Brahmana appeared before him with a request that he would be pleased to resolve some of his doubts. A vigorous discussion followed between the Master and the Brahmana who disputed for a number of days with elaborate arguments Sri Sankara's interpretatoin of one of the tersest of the *Brahma Sutras.* This went on for eight days, each side vindicating its stand and there was no prospect of its conclusion. At this time, one of Sri Sankara's disciples, Padmapada by name, wondered who the doughty debater was. In an intuitive flash it struck him that he must be the great Bhagavan Vyasa, the author of the *Brahma Sutras.* He exclaimed:

> 'Sankara is Siva and Vyasa is Narayana Himself. When these gods themselves dispute, what can a mere mortal like me do?'

Sri Sankara then realised who his disputant was. Prostrating before him he

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* Identified by the present Sankaracharya of Kanchi.

begged to be blessed. Sage Vyasa thereupon lauded the fidelity of Sankara's commentaries and gave them the imprimatur of his approval. Now the extended eight years of Sri Sankara's life were about to be over. Adding another sixteen years to the span of his life, Vyasa bade him propagate the Advaita Sastra in the far reaches of India.

III

Then began the triumphant *digvijaya* of Sri Sankara. The first opponent of Advita which is the philosophy of the upanishads (known as the Uttaramimamsa) was the Purvamimamsaka who believed in the primacy and the immediacy of the Vedic Karmic rituals as the means to *moksha* One of the staunchest protagonists of this school was, Kumarila Bhatta who lay on the banks of the Ganga at Prayag (modern Allahabad) at the point of death, having immolated himself by fire for the sin of *gurudroha* (being a traitor to one's guru), which he acquired by furtively learning the tenets of Buddhism from a Buddhist savant in order to controvert them later. Kumarila, according to the legend, was an incarnation of Kumara, son to Lord Siva. He told Sri Sankara of his predicament which disabled him from debating with him. He bade him go to his own disciple, Mandana Misra living in Mahishmati, saying that he (Mandana) was a more uncompromising ritualist than himself.

Sri Sankara hastened to Mandana's place. Arrived at the city, he was at a loss to discover Mandana's house. He inquired of a woman who was passing by and was told that in the verandah of a house two parrots would be chirping between themselves whether the Vedas were true in their own right or if their truth was derived. That, she said, was Mandana's house. Arriving there, Sri Sankara found the door closed against intruders as a *sraddha* ceremony was being then performed by Mandana. The story is that Sri Sankara let himself in by his yogic powers. Parrying the abuses of the householder who was wroth at a sannyasin interposing himself in a *sraddha* ceremony, Sri Sankara said that he did not come there for *anna biksha* (alms of food) but made him agree to a *vadabhiksha*, (alms of knowledge) after the *sraddha* ceremony was over. The disputants agreed that Mandana's wife Sarasavani who was said to be an incarnation of the goddess Sarasvati, (Mandana being Brahma himself), should act as umpire to the debate. The wager was that if either was defeated, he should adopt the *asrama* of the other, that is, eihter Sri Sankara should become a householder or Mandana should take to monastic discipline. Leaving them to debate between themselves, Sarasavani went to attend to her domestic chores, Before doing so, she adorned each disputant with a garland of flowers saying that the person whose garland showed signs of fading must be considered to have been defeated. The debate went on for a number of days. At the conclusion of the sessions on a particular day, Sarasavani invited both of them together for *bhiksha* signifying that her lord Mandana had become eligible for alms as only a monk is— in other words, that he had been defeated and should, according to the wager, become a sannyasin. This he did, adopting the name Suresvara and thence forward accepted the supremacy of Advaita as a philosophy. He became one of the foremost disciples of Sri Sankara who had earlier, when he was in Banaras, acquired a disciple in the person of Sanandana who came to be known as Padmapada.

IV

Sri Sankara then travelled to Badari on the Himalayas where his guru Govinda and *his* guru Gowdapada were living in the enjoyment of *nirvikalpa samadhi.* He made them revert to world-consciousness by singing the famous Dakshinamurti Stotra. He received their blessings and went to Kailas. According to the story, he was affectionately received by his Great Original, Lord Paramesvara who dowered him with five spatika lingas made of transparent crystals and a transcript of *Soundaryalahari*, a century of hymns in praise of the Divine Mother. As ill-luck would have it, he lost the later fifty nine of these verses which he subsequently replaced by his own composition. The five lingas given by Siva were known as Mokshalinga, Varalinga, Bhogalinga, Muktalinga and Yogalinga.

Sri Sankara then repaired to Kedara where he installed the Muktilinga and established one of his pontificates there. Proceeding thence to Nepal, he vanquished the Buddhists who denied the soul and God. He installed the Varalinga there which is even now in worship in the Pasupatinath temple in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal.

Wending his steps southward the Bhagavatpada went to Dwaraka in the Western corner of India, sacred to the memory of Sri Krishna. He established the Kalika Pitha there and also a pontificate. Crossing the country travelling eastward, he came to Puri where he founded the Vimala Pitha after worshipping Lord Jagannatha. Thence he went to Sri Sailam in the Andhra country where he composed the famous hymn *Sivanandalahari* and installed a Srichakra in front of the shrine of the presiding goddess Sri Bhramarambika. It was at this time that Sri Sankara vanquished the Kapalikas and put down the homicidal practices to which they were addicted in their religious worship. Traversing thence to the Western Ghats, he worshipped Sri Mukambika where he discovered the dumb prodigy who, on being cured of his defect, became his disciple and attained the name Hastamalaka. Another of the disciples was one Giri by name, generally considered to be backward by his fellow-disciples. Receiving a special mark of grace from Sri Sankara, he broke forth into a soul-stirring hymn of eight verses in praise of his guru, celebrated as the *Totakashtaka*, he himself getting the sannyasa name of Totakacharya.

Resuming his travels, Sri Sankara went to Karnatakadesa and reached Rishya-Sringagiri (Sringeri). Here he erected a shrine to Sri Sarada, established another pontificate known as the Sarada Pitha and installed there the *bhogalinga* from among those that he had brought from Kailas.

V

Meanwhile, Sri Sankara's mother was on the point of death. True to his promise to her, Sankara hastened to her bedside and invoked the grace of Vishnu to take her to Vaikuntha. As a sannyasin should not engage in any kind of ritual, his kinsmen refused to permit him to perform the lady's obsequies himself. Upon his insisting that the duty to one's mother overrode all rules and that he would himself perform his mother's cremation, to a man, they all withheld their co-operation. Sri Sankara carried the dead body to the backyard of his house unaided by anybody and lighted the funeral pyre by invoking his spiritual prowess.

Sri Sankara went thence to Tirupati where he established the Dhanakarshana Yantra which, to this day, draws vast sums of wealth from pious devotees. Reaching Jambukeswaram in modern Tiruchirapalli, he tempered the ferocity of Akhilandeswari, the presiding Goddess by installing a shrine to Sri Vighneswara in front of Her, and fixing on the ears of Her person two rings known as Tatankas in the Srichakra pattern. He then went to the land's end in Rameswaram to worship Lord Ramanatha in the linga that he celebrated in his *Dvadasalingstotra.* Returning, he visited Chidambaram and left the Mokshalinga, another of those he got in Kailas, to be worshipped there.

Travels through the length and breadth of the country over, Sri Sankara ultimately reached Kanchipuram near Madras. Kanchi is known as one of the seven *mokshapuris* of our sacred land (places which confer Liberation) and has had, through the years, a memorable political, literary, cultural and religious history. Scholars and saints of all denominations and sects have either visited it in their time or taken permanent residence there. It has been the venue of philosophical disputations of all schools of thought. No religious leader considered his mission fulfilled or his victory complete unless he vanquished rivals of other faiths in that famous city. As its name signifies, Kanchi is the waistline of the earth and its central part. It was but appropriate that Sri Sankara also should go to this place to proclaim the Advaita Vedanta vindicating it against other schools of religion and philosophy. Acclaimed by every one as the supreme master of all that is to know, Sri Sankara ascended before a large assembly the throne of omniscience known as the *sarvajnapitha* at Kanchi.

He then mitigated the *ugrakala,* the fierce aspect of the Goddess Kamakshi drawing

it into a Srichakra which he placed in front of Her and consecrated it. After renovating the temple to Lord Vishnu in the person of Sri Varadaraja, he asked the reigning king of Kanchi to fashion the city in the form of a Srichakra giving the central place to the shrine of Sri Kamakshi. A few things are noteworthy in this connection. Kanchi is famous for its numerous temples in honour of Vishnu and Siva. But all of them, howsoever distant they may be from the temple of Sri Kamakshi, face it without exception. The processional idols of all these shrines are taken round this Kamkshi temple when their annual festivals are celebrated. In none of the Siva temples of Kanchi is there a shrine for Siva's Consort, that of Kamakshi doing service for all of them. The city is famous in the *puranas* as the place where Brahma himself performed a *yajna* attended by all the celestials.

VI

No wonder that Sri Sankara chose Kanchi to establish a pontificate known as the Kamakoti Pitha there. Of the five lingas which he got from Kailas, he reserved the Yogalinga for worship by himself here in the Kamakoti Pitha. Entrusting the four maths that he had established in the important religious centres of the country in charge of each of his four eminent disciples, Sankara chose the fifth that he established in Kanchi known as the Saradamata, for his own stay and ministration. These five maths function to this day as bastions of our ancient Sanatana Dharma in general and of Advaita Vedanta in particular. They have had since Sri Sankara's time a long and illustrious line of pontifical successors who bear his haloed name and continue to discharge the great mission that he entrusted to them. The Math associated with the Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham has a special significance by reason of its being the place where Sri Sankara spent his last days and finally shed his mortal body merging thereafter into the beatitude of *Brahmanubhava.*

VII

The text of the *Srimukhas* (pontifical epistles) granted by the Jagadgurus of the Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha since time immemorial refers to Sri Sankara as निखिलपाषण्डषण्डकण्टकोत्पाटनेन विशदीकृतवेदवेदान्तमार्गषण्मतप्रतिष्ठापकाचार्याः । *i.e.* describes him as 'one who swept off the thorns that encumbered the various forms of worship of the six manifestations of God.' Worship of these deities had waned in our land due to the inroads of Buddhism and Jainism. It was Sri Sankara who rescued them from oblivion and rid some of them of their unholy encrustations. Particular mention may be made of the Vamachara practices in the Sakta religion and the abhorrent rituals of the Kapalikas. Hence Sri Sankara is gratefully spoken of as *Shanmatapratishtapakacharya,* which means, not one who *established* the six forms of worship for the first time, but one who *revived* and gave strength and stability to the existing ones. Nor were they to Sri Sankara six different, and much less, opposed forms. They are six alternative ways in which the same Supreme God is worshipped according to the preference of the worshipper. Each chooses his *ishtadevata* among them, determined by his family tradition (*kulachara*) and his inclination (*ruchi*), and accommodates the rest in his pattern of worship. Thus Sri Sankara was a great integrator within the fold of the Vedic religion and be brought about intrareligious amity among all those who professed the Hindu faith.

Such was the life and work of the illustrious Sankaracharya who packed within a brief period of thirty-two years a series of achievements which are unequalled both in their content and their variety. Judged by any test, as a writer, as a poet, as a thinker and debater, as a prophet and mystic, as a religious organiser, judged by any aspect of his diversified personality Sri Sankara is unique among the great men of the world. He holds a pre-eminent position among the Master Minds that have shaped the thoughts and actions alike of their contemporaries and of posterity. Above all, the Advaita Vedanta that he expounded to such artistic perfection is the one and only philosophy that will effectively make for personal liberation from the shackles of life on the one hand, and for universal amity and peace liquidating social and national rivalries on

the other. The Vedanta associated with his name belongs not to one section of the Hindus only. It is the philosophy of entire humanity and deserves to be carefully studied and scrupulously practised by men in every part of the globe. Most truly, Sri Sankara is referred to with love and devotion as *Lokasankara*, the most brilliant among the benefactors of mankind for all time and in all climes

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SANKARACHARYA

By

DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO.

Sankara by his genius and out of the plenary spiritual experience gave us the grandest philosophical system Advaita. When one looks at the different aspects of his writing, its poetry, its devotion, its grand style, its depth, its disarming impartiality in stating the opponent's views, its acute powers or argumentation, its incisive logic —and above all its unfailing loyality to the Vedas, one wonders which to admire most. So remarkably perfect it is in every way.

By his moral earnestness, intellectual powers and spiritual genius, he has held the loyalty of millions and brought them peace of mind and profound understanding of themselves. He stemmed the tide of the ever increasing tempo of barren ritualism, atheistic nihilism, pernicious primitive cult and horrid and shameful rites. He inaugurated the age of a Rationalistic Spiritual Humanism.

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Let us now advert to a brief consideration of the central concepts of Sankara's Advaita. The one real or the only Real philosophical category Sankara posits is Brahman. It is the non-dual, supreme spirit; a non-composite homogeneous consciousness. It is not an object of knowledge, it is knowledge itself. It cannot be described in terms of any other objects because it is not composite and is attributeless. It is self-manifest, self-luminous like the sun. It does not need any other instrument to make itself known and it makes known all other objects. We do not light a candle to see the sun. There is no way of knowing Brahman except by Being it. All the instruments of knowledge can only negatively indicate what Brahman is not. The purpose of life is Brahman-knowledge according to Sankara. Brahman-knowledge is really Brahman-realization. It is "unconditioned existence", "infinite and unexcellable bliss". This is Liberation.

Brahman is a unique type of absolute consciousness which is neither a subject, nor an object. We cannot predicate anything about it, for to describe it in terms of anything is to limit it. There is nothing real besides Brahman, to describe it with. Brahman, is Reality, Perfection and Bliss.

The Absolute of Sankara is fullness and it does not admit of any type of external or internal relations. It is essentially akin to the Self of man.

The three categories in Advaita Vedanta are: (1) the universe, (2) souls and (3) God. Like all the great philosophers of India, Sankara sets himself to answer the relation between Brahman and the universe on the one hand and the soul on the other. In the history of Indian philosophical thought, in general, and particularly in Vedanta there are various theories explaining the relation between Ultimate Reality and the universe. Sankara feels not satisfied with them. The most prominent theory is the creationist hypothesis according to which the Supreme Lord creates the world with the material cause *prakriti* (Nature). This creationist hypothesis is beset with a number of logical defects. If it is argued that the Lord creates the world, there is the pro-

blem of Evil, that is to be accounted for. If the existence of Evil is attributed to one's Karma (actions), then it is contended that Karma alone will do, and God is a superfluity. If there is evil in the world God should have either allowed it or it must be beyond His powers to check it. In which case God is impotent or malevolent. The creationist hypothesis militates against the goodness and perfection of God. To describe creation as His sport raises many inconvenient questions, *e.g.*, Does the Lord want recreation? Sankara does not accept this theory nor the other theory which holds that *prakriti* (Nature) itself evolves into the form of the universe. Insentient *prakriti* cannot by itself evolve such an orderly universe which discloses great design and purpose and is wonderful in its structure. There is a third theory which describes the Lord transforming Himself into the world of objects. This doctrine has to face several objections. If Brahman is transformed into a number of objects perforce Brahman has to experience all the imperfections and sorrows of finite objects. This goes against the perfection of Brahman. To have Brahman transformed into the world would lead to pantheism. It would spell out in mathematical term: "Brahman minus the world is zero." If it be contended that a part of a Brahman gets transformed and another part remains transcendent, a resourceful later day Advaita thinker compares this to the act of one who takes one half of a fowl for cooking and the other half for laying eggs. Sankara rejected these theories and formulated his original celebrated *vivarta-vada* popularly described as *maya-vada*.

Before understanding the implications of *vivarta-vada* we should note that Sankara is no opponent to the causal concept. Sankara's conception of Brahman as the cause of the world has to be clearly understood, for it is his special contribution to Indian thought. The concept of Nirguna Brahman (Attributeless Absolute) and the docrtine of Vivarta Vada are the special doctrines of the Advaita Siddhanta.

Vivarta-Vada is the one-sided theory of causation. The cause and the effect stand in a peculiar relation. The cause is independent of the effect. But the effect is dependent on the cause. The faults, foibles, and the defects of the effect do not touch the cause. Brahman, the cause *appears* as the universe and the souls. The effect has no organic relationship with the cause. The theory of Vivarta-Vada is based on the acceptance of the category called *Avidya* or *Maya*. Sankara accepts, a second metaphysical principle Maya besides Brahman. Maya is not eternal, but is beginningless, and co-eval with all experience. It is *positive*, with two powers, (1) to conceal Brahman and (2) to project in its place the apparent world of plurality. Maya which is beginningless vanishes with the onset of Brahman-realisation. It is this Maya or Avidya that hides Brahman and shows up in its place the world. The oft-repeated example is the rope being mistaken for the snake, and the mother-of-pearl taken for silver. The relation between the cause and the effect is the relation between the substrate and the superimposition on it. The question why the substrate (Brahman) appears as the superimposed (universe) is unanswerable. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan humorously puts the issue. The reason as to why the rope appears as the snake is a question which every school boy can ask and the philosophers are not able to reply. It is *maya* that is responsible for the superimposition (*Adhyasa*). We can only know a way out of it and not why we got into it. Nobody consciously gets into an illusion. He just falls into it; knowledge of reality dispels the illusion. The exact relation between Brahman and the Universe is clinched by several Advaita thinkers and writers. The world, the *Brahma Sutra* says, "is non-different from the cause." *Non-difference from Brahman does not mean identity but the denial of difference. Tthe effect is none other than the cause, but it is not identical with the cause.* The world is the effect and as effect it shares with the Cause the negation of unreality, and it differs from the Cause in falling short of Reality. Brahman alone is the sole reality and it is non-dependent and self-explanatory. The world depends on Brahman: when the *Vedanta Sutra* states that the world is non-different from Brahman all that it means is, that the world has no reality apart from its cause, which is

the substrate on which the super-imposition appears.

Our world of experience is not a chaos nor is it amoral. It is a moral theatre for working out the salvation of men. It is not a mere collection of ideas as the mentalist describes. It is not the dream-like projection or reverie of individual minds. It is not a phantasmagoria or a shadow-show. It is the creation of Isvara, *i.e.*, Brahman aided by or associated with Maya. It is *the* world. It is objective and obeys the laws of morality and the physical sciences. It is not the creation of the soul, nor can the soul change its forms by its wish. It is the creation of Isvara. The world of experience is unlike the dreams for it has objectivity, common reference and endurance. The exact ontological status of the world is difficult to determine in terms of either the Real or the Unreal. The world of experience is cognised and as such it is not absolute non-existence like the barren women's son. It does not endure in all three times, past, present and future; so it is not real. It cannot be defined either as real or as unreal, nor as a combination of them. Because of this indeterminability in terms of the real and unreal it is described as *anirvachaniya* (Indeterminable). The world has empirical reality and holds good as long as all exist as empirical selves. It ceases to exist as real with the onset of Brahman-realisation. Sankara admits three levels of Reality and not degrees. At the transcendent *Paramarthika* level, Brahman alone is real. In the practical day-to-day *Vyavaharika* level the world and the jivas (souls) and Isvara are all real. The *Pratibhasika* stage is the dream world. Most criticism of Advaita ignores the differences in standpoints and confuses the issues and describes Sankara's Advaita as illusionism (*maya-vada*).

The souls of men are called *jivas*. The jiva is the empirical self of man. According to Sankara it is a complex of the *antahkarana* (internal organ) and *Sakshin* (awareness element). The empirical souls are many, and the transcendental Self is one. The jiva is the subject of all experience. Experience and knowledge are made possible because of the Sakshi element in the jiva. The Sakshi (awareness element) is present in all three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. It has no direct connection with any object. It is self-luminous. It is experienced directly in intuition. The objects are insentient and have to be made known by jiva. It is possible to doubt the object but never to doubt or deny the self for by the very act of its denial its existence is affirmed. The jivan is not a manifestation nor a portion of Brahman, for Brahman is indivisible. The *Sakshin* in association with the internal organs called (*antahkarana*), together with the ten sense organs, *Buddhi* (intellect), *manas* (mind) and *ahamkara* (ego) and encased in the three bodies, *Sthula* (gross) *Sukshma* (subtle) and *Karana* (causal) within the five different sheathes is the jiva. In short, Brahman under the adjunct of nescience (avidya) is Jiva or the individual soul. The Jiva is not on the same level as the objective world for the simple reason that with the onset of Brahman experience the world of object is cancelled and completely negated, whereas the soul is not negated; only its finitude and other adjuncts are removed.

There is a view that there is only one jiva and that is the reflection of Brahman in nescience and the presence and the existence of other jivas are compared to the dreams of that single jiva. Such a radical view is not warranted by Sankara's writings. There is no conflict between Sankara's philosophy of the identity of the individual soul and Brahman, and the acceptance of the existence of the plurality of souls. Sankara gives two examples to illustrate the point: (i) the sun appearing as many reflected images in the waters of different pools, and (ii) infinite space appearing as delimited by artificial barriers.

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Isvara, the God of Advaita Vedanta, is an important category. Brahman when viewed in relation to the empirical world and empirical souls is called Isvara or god. Brahman is looked at under two forms: Brahman as it is; and as it is seen in relation to the world. The conditioning principle is *maya*. *Maya* does not affect Brahman in any way. It is Brahman's own power. There is no higher and lower in respect of

Brahman and Isvara or God. Both are aspects of one and the same. Maya is not a reality, eternal along with Brahman or apart from Him. So it does not make for the introduction of any quality difference. Advaita tradition holds that God is different from jiva and is not a phantom creation or an ideal construction. The idea of God is not to be brushed aside as an irrelevant postulate, or a concession made to the ignorant. The concept is quite pertinent and precious for Advaita. Brahman is the intuitive highest and God is the logical highest. Brahman is Isvara in the world context. Isvara is the creator of the world. Devotion to Him and dedicated service to Him create not only an inclination for Advaita, but they remove all obstructions and help to concentrate on the Lord by drawing away the mind from the lure of the senses. It is a perverse interpretation of Advaita to say that Sankara down-graded Bhakti (Path of Devotion). One has only to see his soul-stirring hymns, the elevating poetry and great imagination in his *stotras* to understand what a great Bhakta he was.

Atheism believes only in the world and not in God, and ordinary theism believes in both, the world and God. Sankara believes in God and God only. For him God is the only reality, as everything and everybody is in essence Brahman. If this type of faith is to be distinguished from ordinary theism, the word for it should not atheism, but "super-theism".

The function of god in Advaita is significant. From the metaphysical point of view he is the ground of the universe and from ontological standpoint he is the object of supreme meditation. A familiar verse of Sankara compares God to the sea and the souls of men to waves. It adds, it would be proper to say that the soul is the property of God and not God is the property of the soul. Further, according to Sankara, God is the dispenser of the moral law according to the nature of the individual's Karma (actions). Karma by itself is inert. It is the Lord that matches the principle of justice to the deserts of the acts of men. He is both the law and the law-giver.

The philosophy of Sankara like all the systems of philosophy envisages the way out of Samsara (worldly life) to Moksha (Liberation).

Sankara's conception of Moksha is unique. From the fullness of his experience and the authority of the scriptures he declares that man and God are consubstantial. Man is not a banished stranger tied down to a body of lust, unredeemed by any glimmer of divinity. He does not believe there is any unbridgeable divide between man and God. He does not revel in the abjectness of man's creaturliness and impotence. He does not regard man as a tiny creature on this petty planet destained to extinction. He affirms the divinity of man. Sankara is unconquerably persuaded that man can rise heaven-high and realise his divine nature.

The Advaita concept of *moksha* has to be distinguished from the concept of *Svarga*. *Svarga* is paradise from which when the fund of merit is exhausted one has to return to earthly life. There is no return from the state of *moksha*. *Moksha* is the natural state of man's consciousness. Atman is Brahman. The self itself is the Absolute.

The soul of man is essentially divine. It is in an eternally realised state. It is the 'uncreated light' in man. It is the imprisoned splendour—in Browning's phrase. The *Chandogya* states that *moksha* is a fact, we have only to discover it. It is not bringing into being something which is not there. If we did so, it will be destroyed; for whatever is produced is bound to be destroyed. It is a making known of what is already there. The *Chandogya* states 'That thou art', not "thou *will become* That". Moksha is compared to the discovery of a treasure which was all along lying hidden under the floor of one's own house, but which one so far has failed to find though passing to and fro over it constantly (*Ch.* viii-iii-2).

If *moksha* is the ever attained nature of our own soul, how is it that we do not realise it ? The answer to the question is, our true nature is overlaid by thick layers of unreality. That is the power of *maya*. It

conceals the nature of the self and projects in its place the world of plurality. In order to realise our true nature, we should get rid of the super-imposition that has concealed our real nature. Only the knowledge of the real substrate can remove the illusion of the superimposition. If we know the truth of the rope, the illusion of the serpent vanishes.

There are several examples, explaining the Advaita concept of *moksha*. We are seeking for the way of liberation outside, like the fabled musk deer that is running hither and thither in search of the fragrance which it is exuding all the time from its own body.

Moksha is the birth right of all individuals. None is denied it for it is the real nature of the soul. According to Sankara there is no class of souls for ever damned to perdition. All are saved. If Tilak said, Swaraj is our birth right, in a more fundamental sense, Sankara affirmed the doctrine that Moksha is everybody's birth right—all are saved. This is the celebrated doctrine of *Sarva-mukti.*

With the removal of *maya* the soul shines in all its natural splendour and realizes its identity with the Absolute. That is *moksha.*

Sankara holds that Brahman-realisation or Moksha can be had here and now, and refers to such an experience of his obliquely is his commentary on the Brahma sutras. Such a Brahman-realization here and now is called *Jivan-mukti.* Such a Brahman-realized soul is called a *Jivan-mukta.* The *Jivan-mukta* is one who is liberated even while he appears to live in this world. The *Jivan-mukta* state is one in which the soul has the experience of the one Self in all things. This great experience transforms man's behaviour. He is a light unto himself. He is not to be judged by our silly yard-sticks of conventional behaviour. He acts, if he acts at all, from no ego-sense. He does not *realise* virtues through effort and conflict and the consciousness of the choice, with all the strain of a tragic moral hero. But he *reveals* virtues. He is easy and discharges whatever work that befalls him, with perfect equanimity. His words are wisdom, his work is worship and his conduct is consecration. He teaches people from the fullness of his experience. He has no illusion. He has no narrow feelings of mine and thine. He regards the whole world as his family. To do the right is his nature.

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The principle sources of Sankara's Advaita are three: (1) The Scriptures, (2) Logic and (3) His plenary spiritual experience. Revelation for Sankara posits the great ruths of Vedanta (Hindu Scriptures). The great truths of Vedanta are the Hypothesis with which he enables us to explain the facts and details of life. He does not take them on trust. He examines them in the light of reasoning. Reasoning plays a very important place in his system. For him philosophy is examined belief. His is an experiential approach to reality. Experience is the ultimate and unassailable proof for the existence of the spirit. Sankara shifts the centre of gravity of proof from authority to experience. His attitude is not dogmatic. First and foremost Sankara, unlike Western thinkers, does not confine experience to walking life alone, but also includes, dream and deep sleep experiences. That alone presents a total picture.

The critical attitude of Sankara is disclosed in his approach to the scriptures, Vedas. He does not accept the entire Vedas as authoritative and as dealing with spiritual truths. He divides the Vedas into the Karma Kanda (Action-Portion) and the Jnana Kanda (Knowledge-Portion). The former deals with sacrifices and Dharma, objects that have to be brought into existence through action. Their import is different from and is not the same as that of the Upanishads. The Upanishads represent the Jnana Kanda. According to Sankara the Upanishads only embody the spiritual truths and deal with Brahman. Authority is not claimed for all the statements in the Upanishads; only the purportful scriptures disclose the import. It is reasoning that has to determine which statement is meaningful, which initial passages are to be taken.

Sankara's critical attitude was not only directed to revelation, for he also examines the limitations of *reason* as the instru-

ment of human knowledge. He is neither an arrogant free thinker nor a blind literalist. He knows that 'reason' as a faculty is inconclusive and that it is a double-edged weapon and can be put into the service of any ends we set ourselves to achieve. Reason cannot prescribe ends to us. The attitude of Sankara towards reason is one of trust tempered by criticism. Reason can demonstrate but not discover ultimate reality. Sankara held the balance even between Rationalism and Intuitionism. He did not want us to abdicate reason and sink back to the level of animals. He warns us, "he who accepts anything without inquiry is prevented from gaining the good and comes to grief". "A hundred scriptural passages cannot turn a pot into a cloth". He stood for the use of reason when it did not conflict with the spiritual end. He reconciles reason and revelation, intellect and intuition. He is scientific in that he makes experience the final proof and the ultimate criterion of things.

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The entire ethical training necessary for Brahman-realisation centres round the target of Removing the *Ajnana* (nescience) that has covered Brahman. Once the ajnana is removed, the truth reveals itself. Once we know the truth of the rope, no longer do we labour under the delusion of the snake. For the removal of the super-imposition, the knowledge of the substrate is necessary.

The soul of man has collected in his mind a complex of vast impressions through his many lives. He has to cleanse his mind of all these stains.

Karmayoga (Path of Action, or performance of one's prescribed duties) aims at this cleansing of the mind of all impurities. The performance of one's Karma solely for the welfare of the world, and without any personal desire in the fruits prepares the ground for man to undertake the pilgrimage of the soul towards liberation. With this equipment he should seek the preceptor (*Guru*) to study the *Sastras* and not rely on self-study. The illumned Guru teaches the earnest student the art of Brahmavidya (knowledge of the Self). The importance of Guru is emphasised all the time. From the Guru one learns the truths of Vedanta. The next stage is to examine the *pros* and *cons* of the truths taught by the *Guru*. They must become one's own. This path of Knowledge ultimately leads the aspirant to Brahman-realization, *i.e.*, moksha.

Sankara's conception of moksha is not an external revelation. There is no need here for the thunder or the burning bush of Moses or the revealing tempest as in Job, or the angel of Gabriel of Mohammed. The Kingdom of God is within you. It is a realisation here and now. Advaita is not merely a system of metaphysics, but is also a spiritual guide to the art of right living, living purposefully and with wisdom. Its centre of gravity is *conduct*. Advaita metaphysics and religion has a very wholesome humanistic influence on the life of man.

A GRAND SOCIAL IDEALIST

By

DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN

The Advaitism of Samkara is a system of great speculative daring and logical subtlety. Its austere intellectualism, its remorseless logic, which marches on indifferent to the hopes and beliefs of man, its relative freedom from theological obsessions, make it a great example of a purely philosophical scheme. Thibaut, who cannot be charged with any partiality for Samkara speaks of his philosophy in these words: "The doctrine advocated by Samkara is, from a purely philosophical point of view, and apart from all theological considerations, the most important and interesting one which has arisen on Indian soil; neither those forms of the Vedanta which diverge from the view represented by Samkara, nor any of the non-Vedantic systems can be compared with the so-called orthodox Vedanta in boldness, depth and subtlety of speculation". It is impossible to read Samkara's writings, packed as they are with serious and subtle thinking, without being conscious that one is in contact with a mind of a very fine penetration and profound spirituality. With his acute feeling of the immeasurable world, his stirring gaze into the abysmal mysteries of spirit, his unswerrving resolve to say neither more nor less than what could be proved, Samkara stands out as a heroic figure of the first rank in the somewhat motley crowd of the religious thinkers of mediaeval India. His philosophy stands forth complete, needing neither a before nor an after. It has a self-justifying wholeness characteristic of works of art. It expounds its own presuppositions, is ruled by its own end, and holds all its elements in a stable, reasoned equipoise.

The list of qualifications which Samkara lays down for a student of philosophy brings out how, for him, philosophy is not an intellectual pursuit but a dedicated life. The first, "discrimination between things eternal and non-eternal," demands of the student the power of thought, which helps him to distinguish between the unchanging reality and the changing world. For those who possess this power, it is impossible to desist from the enterprise of metaphysics. "Renunciation of the enjoyment of the reward here and in the other world" is the second requirement. In the empirical world and man's temporal life within it there is little to satisfy the aspirations of spirit. Philosophy gets its chance, as well as its justification, through the disillusionment which life brings. The seeker after truth must refuse to abase himself before things as they are and develop an austere detachment characteristic of the superior mind. Moral preparation is insisted on as the third requisite, and, lastly, longing for liberation (*mumukshutvam*) is mentioned. We must have a mind disposed, as St. Luke expresses it, "for eternal life".

Samkara presents to us the true ideal of philosophy, which is not so much knowledge as wisdom, not so much logical learning as spiritual freedom. For Samkara, as for some of the greatest thinkers of world like Plato and Plotinus, Spinoza and Hegel, philosophy, is the austere vision of eternal truth, majestic in its freedom from the

petty cares of man's paltry life. Through the massive and at the same time subtle dialectic of Samkara there shows forth a vivid, emotional temperament, without which philosophy tends to become a mere game of logic. A master of the strictest logic, he is also master of a noble and animated poetry which belongs to another order. The rays of his genius have illumined the dark places of thought and soothed the sorrows of the most forlorn heart. While his philosophy fortifies and consoles many, there are, of course, those to whom it seems to be an abyss of contradiction and darkness. But whether we agree or differ, the penetrating light of his mind never leaves us where we were.

Samkara appeared, at one and the same time, as an eager champion of the orthodox faith and a spiritual reformer. He tried to bring back the age from the brilliant luxury of the Puranas to the mystic truth of the Upanishads. The power of the faith to lead the soul to the higher life became for him the test of its strength. He felt impelled to attempt the spiritual direction of his age by formulating a philosophy and religion which could satisfy the ethical and spiritual needs of the people better than the systems of Buddhism, Mimamsa and Bhakti. The theists were veiling the truth in a mist of sentiment. With their genius for mystical experience, they were indifferent to the practical concerns of life. The Mimamsaka-emphasis on *karma* developed ritualism devoid of spirit. Virtue can face the dark perils of life and survive only if it be the fine flower of thought. The Advaita philosophy alone, in the opinion of Samkara, could do justice to the truth of the conflicting creeds, and so he wrote all his works with the one purpose of helping the individual to a realisation of the identity of his soul with Brahman, which is the means of liberation from *samsara*.

In his wanderings from his birthplace in Malabar to the Himalayas in the north he came across many phases of worship, and accepted all those which had in them the power to elevate man and refine his life. He did not preach a single exclusive method of salvation, but composed hymns of unmistakeable grandeur addressed to the different gods of popular Hinduism—Vishnu, Siva, Sakti, Surya. All this affords a striking testimony to the universality of his sympathies and the wealth of natural endowment. While revivifying the popular religion, he also purified it. He put down the grosser manifestations of the Sakta worship in South India. In the Deccan, it is said that he suppressed the unclean worship of Siva as a dog under the name of Mallari, and the pernicious practices of Kapalikas whose god Bhairava desired human victims. He condemned branding or marking the body with hot metallic designs. He learned from the Buddhist church that discipline, freedom from superstition and ecclesiastical organisations help to preserve the faith clean and strong, and himself established ten religious orders of which four retain their prestige till to-day.

The life of Samkara makes a strong impression of contraries. He is a philosopher and a poet, a savant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer. Such diverse gifts did he possess that different images present themselves, if we try to recall his personality. One sees him in youth, on fire with intellectual ambition, a stiff and intrepid debater; another regards him as a shrewed political genius, attempting to impress on the people a sense of unity; for a third, he is a calm philosopher engaged in the single effort to expose the contradictions of life and thought with an unmatched incisiveness; for a fourth, he is the mystic who declares that we are all greater than we know. There have been few minds more universal than his.

Samkara's system is unmatched for its metaphysical depth and logical power. Thought follows thought naturally, until Advaitism is seen to complete and crown the edifice. It is a great example of monistic idealism which it is difficult to meet with an absolutely conclusive metaphysical refutation. Samkara holds up a vision of life acceptable in the highest moments of poetry and religion, when we are inclined to sympathise with his preference for intuition to the light of the understanding. So long as he remains on this high ground, he is unanswerable. But a lingering doubt oppresses the large majority of mankind, who very rarely get into these exalted heights. They feel that it is unjust to leave in such

high disdain the world in which they live, move and have their being, and relegate it to *ajnana* or darkness, offering merely as a solace that all disagreeable appearances will quickly vanish in the eternal light. For them the all-transforming sunlight of the heights is spurious, and they declare that Samkara's system is one of mystical indifference to fact. That human suffering will be healed, that the whole world will vanish like a pitiful mirage, that all our trouble is of our own making, and that in the world's finale all people will find that absolute oneness which will suffice for all hearts, compose all resentments and atone for all crimes, seem to many to be pious assumptions. The entranced self-absorption which arms itself with sanctity, involves a cruel indifference to practical life hardly acceptable to average intelligence.

Samkara knows all this, and so gives us a logical theism which does not slight the intellect, does not scorn the wisdom of ages and is at the same time the highest intellectual account of the truth. What is the relation between the absolutism of intuition and the empirical theism of logic, Samkara does not tell us; for as Goethe wisely observed, "man is born not to solve the problem of the universe, but to find out where the problem begins, and then to restrain himself within the limits of the comprehensible". Samkara recognises that there is a region which we cannot penetrate, and a wise agnosticism is the only rational attitude. The greatness of Samkara's achievements rests on the peculiar intensity and splendour of thought with which the search for reality is conducted, on the high idealism of spirit grappling with the difficult problems of life, regardless of theological consequences, and on the vision of a consummation which places divine glory on human life.

Supreme as a philosopher and a dialectician, great as a man of calm judgment and wide toleration, Samkara taught us to love truth, respect reason and realise the purpose of life. Twelve centuries have passed, and yet his influence is visible. He destroyed many an old dogma, not by violently attacking it, but by quietly suggesting something more reasonable, which was at the same time more spirtiual too. He put into general circulation a vast body of important knowledge and formative ideas which, though contained in the Upanishads, were forgotten by the people, and thus recreated for us the distant past. He was not a dreaming idealist, but a practical visionary, a philosopher, and at the same time a man of action, what we may call a social idealist on the grand scale. Even those who do not agree with his general attitude to life will not be reluctant to allow him a place among the immortals.*

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* From *The Vedanta according to Samkara and Ramanuja.*

SANKARA AND SOCIAL LIFE

By
P. C. SUBBAMMA

Among the path-finders to the eternal, Sankara stands pre-eminent. He spent his entire life, short though it was, in urging his fellowmen to turn from the ephemeral to the abiding, from the fleeting and temporal life to the spiritual and the eternal one. He was born not to lead an aimless life, but with the greatest mission one could have in life, i.e. to lead mankind to the blessedness of unexcellable peace, by dedicating himself to the quest of the Absolute and by sharing his great discovery with all his fellow-beings. At a time when false doctrines were misguiding the generality of people and orthodoxy had nothing better to offer to counteract the atheism of the heterodox than a barren and outmoded ritualism, Sankara recaptured the heights of the Upanisadic philosophy and brought from there for the benefit of humanity the waters of eternal life.

The quintessence of the philosophy of Sankara is stated by himself in half a verse thus: 'The Absolute spirit is the reality; the world of appearance is illusory; the so-called individual soul is the Absolute itself and no other'. (Brahma satyam jagan mithya, jivo brahmaiva naaparah). The metaphysic of the Absolute which Sankara taught is, it is true, difficult to understand.

According to Advaita-Vedanta, Brahman is the one without-a-second (ekam eva advitiyam). The world is an appearance of it, even as the snake is of the rope, or silver is of the nacre. The so called individual souls are individuals only so long as there is identification with body-mind complexes which are 'not-self'; when the wrong identification is removed through the removal of nescience, the soul is realized to be non-different from Brahman. Brahman or Atman is of the nature of plenary being, pure consciousness, and the plenitude of bliss (Sat, chit,ananda). These expressions, however, should not be understood as standing for the characteristics of Brahman. By these what is meant is that the non-dual self is not non-being, not non-conscious, and is not of the nature of misery. Brahman is *nirguna* (without characteristics). To define a thing is to limit it, to finitize it. The infinite and the unlimited cannot be characterized in terms of finite categories. The category of substance-attribute does not apply to Brahman. Even to say that it is one is not strictly true; for the category of number is inapplicable to the Absolute. That is why Sankara calls his philosophy 'Advaita', the doctrine of the not-two, or non-dualism.

Advaita is not opposed to any Reality-view. What advaita aims at is to show that the rival views or other philosophical systems have their limitations and are helpful only in so far as they lead to something beyond. The goal of metaphysics is the total experience (*purnanubhava*). The supreme objective of Advaita is to urge man not to rest till he has gained that experience. Thus the metaphysical quest for Reality finds its fulfilment in Advaita-Vedanta.

Sankara holds that Brahman is an object of intuition. Brahman is apprehended by

immediate experience and not discursive reasoning. In this experience everything is felt as the Atman or Brahman. The distinction between the knower, the process of knowing and the object known disappears. The conditions necessary for the ordinary empirical knowledge are not present here. There is a feeling of certitude. Sankara asks, 'How can one contest the heart-felt experience of another as having Brahman-knowledge while living on the earth?'[1]

Sankara postulates two standpoints: the absolute (paramarthika) and the relative (vyavaharika). According to the first, which is the supreme truth, Brahman is non-dual and relationless. It alone is; there is nothing real besides it. But from our standpoint which is the second, the empirical or relative standpoint, there is the world. The world is not absolutely real but at the same time, it is not *a-sat* or nothing. The world has empirical existence. In the state of enlightenment we realize that the world is only a manifestation of Brahman. Brahman or Atman exists for itself; everything has being (*Satta*) in and through Brahman. What appears as not-self (*Anama-vastu*) has its existence in Brahman or Atman. Sankara denies only the existence of the world apart from or independent of Brahman. Sankara is also emphatic that the world is not to be equated with a dream phenomenon.[2]

We now consider briefly the place assigned to morals in the teachings of Indian culture. That without moral purity, not only the goal of religion, but also metaphysical insight cannot be gained is a principle universally accepted.

An upanishadic text declares:

> 'Not he who has not ceased from evil conduct; not he who is not tranquil; not he who cannot concentrate his mind; not even he whose mind is not composed can reach the self through knowledge[3]'

And there is the well known saying, 'The Vedas do not cleanse those who are unrighteous'. Sankara includes among the qualifications for the prospective student of Vedanta such accomplishments as freedom from passions, sublimation of the mind, and the cultivation of the cardinal virtues. When the mind is in the grip of passion such as appetition and aversion, it cannot understand even empirical truth, and so it goes without saying, says Sankara, that the mind must be thoroughly cleansed before it can realize the truth of the inner self. It is not creeds that are important, but character and conduct. If the way we live is pure, the vision of truth will follow. Dharma is the doorway to perfection.

There is some criticism that since the primary concern of Indian Philosophy is the liberation of the individual from *samsara*, the promotion of social welfare cannot come within the purview of its teachings. According to Advaita-Vedanta the world with all its members is illusory. What the illusory individual has to aim at is his own escape from the illusory world. What incentive could he, then, have to work for the betterment of the world which would only serve to preserve it?

In reply to this criticism, it should be remembered that the virtues that everyone should cultivate in order even to aspire for perfection are *social excellences.* Virtues like non-injury, although expressed negatively, are not negative virtues. *Ahimsa,* for example, is not simply refraining from doing harm. It stands for positive universal love. It is explicitly enjoined that one has to look upon others as oneself. One ought to become the friend of all and do good to all through acts, thoughts and speech. When an individual becomes a sannyasin. his social interests do not shrink but on the contrary, expand.

A word may now be said about Advaita-Vedanta, against which the charge we are examining is chiefly levelled. If the world is an illusion, it is asked, what meaning can social service have, and what purpose can it serve? And Sankara's Maya-vada makes way for an a-moral (if not immoral) social life. In reply, it may not be out of place to point out that just as the modern

1. S.B. IV. 1,15.
2. S.B. II. 2.29.
3. *Katha* ii, 24.

physicist's conception of material things which is very different from the popular notion has not rendered the making and using the furniture like tables and chairs, and life-functions such as eating and drinking either useless or meaningless, even so the view that the world is *maya* does not take away anything that is significant from the usages of our experience in the world. The knowledge that the earth will be burnt up at some distant future, according to one physical theory, does not rob our activities of any content, so also the knowledge that we shall be seeing the world *in a different way when we gain perfection* will not make our life *now* meaningless or purposeless. On the contrary, such knowledge will impart to our existence true significance and proper direction. *At no stage in the life of an individual, according to Advaita, is the need to serve the world to be dispensed with. When one is an aspirant for mokhsa and a student of Vedanta, one should perform one's duties without any selfish motive in order io get the mind rendered pure; for it is only the purified mind that can receive enlightenment. The enlightened one, the one who has gained perfection, has no selfish ends to aim at or achieve. So all his actions result in the greatest good to the world.* Let me cite here a passage from Sankara's *Gita-bhashya.* Commenting on the verse (III. 20) which refers to king Janaka and others as spiritual exemplars, Sankara says: 'If they were sages who had gained the true vision, then, it should be taken that they performed actions in accordance with *prarabdha* for the sake of world-welfare; or if they were aspirants who had not acquired the plenary wisdom, then, we should say that they performed their duties because such performance is the means for purifying the mind.' Working for world-welfare (*loka-sangraha*) is defined by Sankara thus: it is preventing the masses from following the wrong path (*lokasya unmarga pravrttinivaranani loka-sangrahah*), A later commentator, Sankarananda, adds: *lokasangraha* is helping the masses to get liberated by showing them the right path. So, according to Advaita, though knowledge is the direct means for liberation, Karma (good actions) is not rejected. Morality is a stepping stone but it is not a stopping place. And devotion to Isvara is a necessary step to Advaita-realization.

Thus morality and devotion are indispensable principles in the case of an aspirant even for the realization of the Absolute or ultimate Truth. Sankara himself did various activities for the promotion of religious faith in society. From Badari and Kedara to Kanya-Kumari and Rameswaram, numberless temples and other religious institutions bespeak even today of the great service rendered by Sankara to Hindu religion and philosophy. There is almost no holy place in India whose greatness has not been strengthened by Sankara's visit. By calling humanity to a realization of infinite Bliss and by showing the way to that realization, Sankara became the great benefactor of the world that his name signifies. In the words of Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi: 'who is sankara? Sankara is the one who brings delight to the world. He alone is Siva. Siva is the giver of auspiciousness'. A verse which celebrates his unique service to humanity reads thus:

> *Sruti - smrti - purananam alayam karunalayam,*
>
> *namami Bhagavatpada Sankaram lokasankaram.*

"I salute Sankara Bhagavatpada, the bestower of blessedness on the world, the repository of all the wisdom that is contained in the sacred texts, and the incarnation of grace."

THE SYSTEM OF SANKARA

By

DR. WILL DURANT

The word Vedanta meant originally the end of the Vedas, that is, the Upanishads. Today India applies it to that system of philosophy which sought to give logical structure and support to the essential doctrine of the Upanishads—the organ-point that sounds throughout Indian thought—that God (Brahman) and the soul (Atman) are one. The oldest known form of this widely accepted of all Hindu philosophies is the *Brahma-sutra* of Badarayana (ca. 200 B.C.)-555 aphorisms, of which the first announces the purpose of all: "Now, then a desire to know Brahman." Almost a thousand years later Gaudapada wrote a commentary on these *sutras*, and taught the esoteric doctrine of the system to Govinda, who taught it to Shankara, who composed the most famous of Vedanta commentaries, and made himself the greatest of Indian philosophers.

In his short life of thirty-two years Shankara achieved that union of sage and saint, of wisdom and kindliness, which characterizes the loftiest type of man produced in India.

Born among the studious Nambudiri Brahmans of Malabar, he rejected the luxuries of the world, and while still a youth became a sannyasi, worshipping unpretentiously the gods of the Hindu pantheon, and yet mystically absorbed in the vision of an all-embracing Brahman. It seemed to him that the profoundest religion and the profoundest philosophy were those of the Upanishads. He could pardon the polytheism of the people, but not the atheism of Sankhya, or the agnosticism of Buddha. Arriving in the north as a delegate of the south, he won such popularity at the University of Benaras that it crowned him with its highest honours, and sent him forth, with a retinue of disciples, to champion Brahmanism in all the debating halls of India. At Benares, probably, he wrote his famous commentaries on the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, in which he attacked with theological ardour and scholastic subtlety all the heretics of India, and restored Brahmanism to that position of intellectual leadership from which Buddha and Kapila had deposed it.

There is much metaphysical wind in these discourses, and arid deserts of textual exposition; but they may be forgiven in a man who at the age of thirty could be at once the Aquinas and the Kant of India. Like Aquinas, Shankara accepts the full authority of his country's Scriptures as a divine revelation, and then sallies forth to find proofs in experience and reason for all scriptural teachings. Unlike Aquinas, however, he does not believe that reason can suffice for such a task; on the contrary he wonders 'Have we not exaggerated the power and role, the clarity and reliability, of reason?' Jaimini was right: reason is a lawyer, and will prove anything we wish; for every argument it can find an equal and opposite argument, and its upshot is a scepticism that weakens all force of character and undermines all values of life. It is not logic that we need, says

Shankara, it is insight, the faculty (akin to art) of grasping at once the essential out of the irrelevant, the eternal out of the temporal, the whole out of the part; this is the first pre-requisite to philosophy. The second is a willingness, to observe, inquire and think for understanding's sake, not for the sake of invention, wealth or power; it is a withdrawal of the spirit from all the excitement, bias and fruits of action. Thirdly, the philosopher must acquire self-restraint, patience and tranquillity; he must learn to live above physical temptation or material concerns. Finally there must burn, deep in his soul, the desire for *moksha*, for liberation from ignorance, for an end to all consciousness of a separate self, for a blissful absorption in the Brahman of complete understanding and infinite unity. In a word, the student needs not the logic of reason so much as a cleansing and deepening discipline of the soul. This, perhaps, has been the secret of all profound education.

Shankara establishes the source of his philosophy at a remote and subtle point never quite clearly visioned again until, a thousand years later, Immanuel Kant wrote his *Critique of Pure Reason*. How, he asks, is knowledge possible? Apparently, all our knowledge comes from the senses, and reveals not the external itself, but our sensory adaptation—perhaps transformation—of that reality. By sense, then, we can never quite know the "real"; we can know it only in that garb of space, time and cause which may be a web created by our organs of sense and understanding, designed or evolved to catch and hold that fluent and elusive reality whose existence we can surmise, but whose character we can never objectively describe; our way of perceiving will forever be inextricably mingled with the thing perceived.

This is not the airy subjectivism of the solipsist who thinks that he can destroy the world by going to sleep. The world exists, but it is Maya—not delusion, but phenomenon, an appearance created partly by our thought. Our incapacity to perceive things except through the film of space and time, or to think of them except in terms of cause and change, is an innate limitation, an Avidya, or ignorance, which is bound up with our very mode of perception, and to which, therefore, all flesh is heir. Maya and Avidya are the subjective and objective sides of the great illusion by which the intellect supposes that it knows the real; it is through Maya and Avidya, through our birth right of ignorance, that we see a multiplicity of objects and a flux of change; in truth there is only one Being, and change is 'a mere name' for the superficial fluctuations of forms. Behind the Maya or Veil of change and things, to be reached not by sensation or intellect but only by the insight and intuition of the trained spirits, is the one universal reality, Brahman.

This natural obscuration of sense and intellect by the organs and forms of sensation and understanding bars us likewise from perceiving the one unchanging Soul that stands beneath all individual souls and minds. Our separate selves, visible to perception and thought, are as unreal as the phantasmagoria of space and time; individual differences and distinct personalities are bound up with body and matter, they belong to the kaleidoscopic world of change; and these merely phenomenal selves will pass away with the material conditions of which they are a part, But the underlying life which we feel in ourselves when we forget space and time, cause and change, is the very essence and reality of us, that Atman which we share with all selves and things and which, undivided and omnipresent, is identical with Brahman, God.

But what is God? Just as there are two selves—the ego and atman—and two worlds—the phenomenal and noumenal— so there are two deities; an Ishvara or Creator worshipped by the people through the patterns of space, cause, time and change, and a Brahman or Pure Being worshipped by that philosophical piety which seeks and finds, behind all separate things and selves, one universal reality, unchanging amid all changes, indivisible amid all divisions, eternal despite all vicissitudes of form, all birth and death. Polytheism, even theism, belongs to the world of Maya and Avidya; they are forms of worship that correspond to the forms of perception and thought;

they are as necessary to our moral life as space, time and cause are necessary to our intellectual life, but they have no absolute validity or objective truth.

To Shankara the existence of God is no problem, for he defines God as existence and identifies all real being with God. But of the existence of a personal God, creator or redeemer, there may he thinks, be some question; such a deity, says this pre-plagiarist of Kant, cannot be proved by reason, he can only be postulated as a practical necessity, offering peace to our limited intellects, and encouragement to our fragile morality. The philospher, though he may worship in every temple and bow to every god, will pass beyond these forgivable forms of popular faith; feeling the illusoriness of plurality, and the monsitic unity of all things, he will adore, as the Supreme Being, Being itself indescribable, limitless, spaceless, timeless, causeless, changeless Being, the source and substance of all reality. We may apply the adjectives "conscious," "intelligent," even "happy" to Brahman, since Brahman includes all selves and these may have such qualities; but all other adjectives would be applicable to Brahman equally, since. It includes all qualities of all things. Essentially Brahman is neuter, raised above personality and gender, beyond good and evil, above all moral distinctions, all differences and attributes, all desires and ends. Brahman is the cause and effect, the timeless and secret essence, of the world.

The goal of philosophy is to find that secret, and to lose the seeker in the secret found. To be one with God means, for Shankara, to rise above—or to sink beneath—the separateness and brevity of the self, with all its narrow purposes and interests, to become unconscious of all parts, divisions, things, to be placidly at one, in a desireless Nirvana, with that great ocean of Being in which there are no warring purposes, no competing selves, no parts, no space, and no time. To find this blissful peace (*Ananda*) a man must renounce not merely the world but himself; he must look upon suffering and death as Maya, surface incidents of body and matter, time and change, and he must not think of his own personal qualities and fate; a single moment of self-interest or pride can destroy all his liberation. Good works cannot give a man salvation, for good works have no validity or meaning except in the Maya world of space and time; only the knowledge of the saintly seer can bring that salvation which is the recognition of the identity of self and the universe, Atman and Brahman, soul and God, and the absorption of the part in the whole. Only when this absorption is complete does the wheel of reincarnation stop; for then it is seen that the separate self and personality, to which reincarnation comes, is an illusion. It is Ishvara, the Maya god, that gives rebirth to the self in punishment and reward; but "when the identity" of Atman and Brahman "has become known, then," says Shankara, "the soul's existence as wanderer, and Brahman's exisetnce as creator" (*i.e.*, as Ishavara) "have vanished away." Ishvara and Karma, like things and selves, belong to the exoteric doctrine of Vedanta as adapted to the needs of the common man; in the esoteric or secret doctrine soul and Brahman are one—never wandering, never dying, never changed.

It was thoughtful of Shankara to confine his esoteric doctrine to philosophers; for as Voltaire believed that only a society of philosophers could survive without laws, so only a society of supermen could live beyond good and evil. Critics have complained that if good and evil are Maya, part of the unreal world, then all moral distinctions fall away, and devils are as good as saints. But these moral distinctions, Shankara cleverly replies, are real within the world of space and time, and are binding for those who live in the world. They are not binding upon the soul that has united itself with Brahman; such a soul can do no wrong, since wrong implies desire and action, and the liberated soul, by definition, does not move in the sphere of desire and (self-considering) action. Whoever consciously injures another lives on the plane of Maya, and is subject to its distinctions, its morals and

its laws. Only the philosopeher is free, only wisdom is liberty.*

It was a subtle and profound philosophy to be written by a lad in his twenties. Shankara not only elaborated it in writing and defended it successfully in debate, but he expressed snatches of it in some of the most sensitive religious poetry of India.

Ten religious orders were founded in his name, and many disciples accepted and developed his philosophy. One of them—some say Shankara himself—wrote for the people a popular exposition of the Vedanta —the *Mohamudgara*, or "Hammer of Folly"—in which the essentials of the system were summed up with clarity and force:

> Fool! give up thy thirst for wealth, banish all desires from thy heart. Let thy mind be satisfied with what is gained by thy Karma. . . . Do not be proud of wealth, of friends, or of youth; time takes all away in a moment. Leaving quickly all this, which is full of illusion, enter into the place of Brahman. . . . Life is tremulous, like a water-drop on a lotus-leaf. . . . Time is playing, life is waning—yet the breath of hope never ceases. The body is wrinkled, the hair grey, the mouth has become toothless, the stick in the hand shakes, yet man leaves not the anchor of hope. . . . Preserve equanimity always. . . . In thee, in me and in others there dwells Vishnu alone; it is useless to be angry with any body, or impatient. See every self in Self, and give up all thought of difference.

*We do not know how much Parmenides insistence that the Many are unreal, and that only the one exists, owed to the *Upanishads*, or contributed to Shankara; nor can we establish any connection, of cause or suggestion, between Shankara and the astonishingly similar philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

SANKARA AND THE WEST

By

PROF. NINIAN SMART.

Sankaracharya has become known to the West mainly at second hand. The reason for this is his enormous influence upon modern expositions of the essentials of Hinduism. An important feature of the latter has been the thesis that all religions essentially point to the same goal, to the realization of the Self. Indeed, much of what counts as Vedanta in the West (as expounded, for example, by Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood and others) essentially derives from Sankara. By contrast the Vedantic interpretations of Ramanuja and Madhva, for example, are much less well known. One reason for this situation is that Sankara's brilliant exegetical technique and philosophical thinking were crystallized in the doctrine of differing levels of truth—a principle which can naturally be applied to the problem of seeing differing religious formulations as lying on a continuum from popular cults, through theism, to the absolutism expressed in Sankara's idealism. The principle resolves certain apparent contradictions between religious beliefs.

Another cause of the influence of Sankara in recent times has been the fact that at the time when Western philosophy and Indian philosophy came into fruitful symbiosis—in the latter part of the 19th century and in the early years of the 20th—absolute idealism, derived from Hegel, was the dominating motif in Western philosophising. Its apparent analogy to Advaita Vedanta led to frequent expressions of a new synthesis between East and West.

In the present century also there was the pioneering work of Rudolf Otto, in his *Mysticism East and West,* which made an important comparison between Sankara and Eckhart, thus encouraging the interest in assimilating the results of the contemplative life, whether East or West, to the same goal of realizing an absolute lying beyond the personal God who is the object of devotion for the ordinary man, etc. The reputation of Sankara as a *prachannabauddh* was not also entirely unfounded, and issued in a wider synthesis between Christian, Sufi, Buddhist and Hindu mysticism (*i.e.*) mysticism in the sense of the pursuit of the contemplative life, resulting in the realization of some kind of realization or union or rapport with ultimate Reality). More recently there are such works as W. T. Stace's *Mysticism and Philosophy* which come to general conclusions compatible with the world-picture delineated in Sankara's writings.

Consequently it is not absurd to say that Sankara lies behind the picture of Hinduism, and especially of Hinduism in its higher contemplative forms presented to the West in the present century. The interest in such an Advaitic Hinduism (admittedly modified in various ways by modern exponents, both East and West) has been boosted by the increased concern both among young and old in the West for direct experiential tests of religious truth and by the interest in mysticism.

It is true that this Western concern for Eastern forms of contemplation has different forms, and is sometimes negative. It is sometimes negative in that it expresses an alienation from traditional forms of

religion in the West and from the social milieu in which traditional Christianity made living sense for the majority of the population. Dissatisfaction with present religious practices and institutions is not necessarily the correct basis for an exploration of the ideas and ideals of Sankara. Nevertheless it testifies to the sense that religion, to be revitalised, needs to be made directly experiential—and the implicit experientialism of Sankara and of modern Advaitic Hinduism therefore can have a a powerful appeal. However, Sankara is not the only teacher to whom people in the West, thus dissatisfied with traditional formulations and practices, are liable to turn. There is, as it happens, an even greater interest in Buddhism. This is partly because Buddhism has been typically, in a way untrue of most Hinduism in the past, a 'universal' or missionary religion. Whereas Sankara was primarily teaching and working within the structure of the Indian tradition, Buddhism even by the time of Sankara was already widespread over Asia. This 'universalism' of Buddhism, as expressed in the diversity of cultural forms in which it works, makes it easier to assimilate in the Western context. It also happens that the Vedic principle of transcendental revelation, less prominent in Buddhism, is less well adapted to present-day Western consciousness, which is so explicitly anti-authoritarian in matters of religion. This is where Vivekananda's Advaitic humanism scored, in that it was pitched in terms of the realization of man's potential, a theme of course implicit in Sankara, but obscured by the fact that his best-known work consists in the interpretation of a scriptural tradition.

Another problem from the point of view of the modern West is Sankara's doctrine of *Maya*. It is true that "illusion" is not the best translation. Nevertheless it has become commonly accepted in the West, and rather misleadingly, that the central teaching of Hinduism about the world is that it is unreal. As a merely metaphysical doctrine this might not matter: but it seems to have valuational consequences. Hence present-day concerns to alter and change the real world for the better, both materially and socially run counter to the Western interpretation of Hinduism as world-negating. To say the least, this tension is unfortunate. As Ramanuja pointed out with critical clarity, Sankara's criterion of "illusoriness" was impermanence—a very different idea from unreality. Moreover, the usual Western picture of Hinduism is mainly grounded on ignorance and derivative from stupid folk tales about Hindu self-mortification (of course, the phenomenon exists, but it is almost never seen in context by Westerners). This trend against idealistic accounts of the world has created wrong judgments about the new formulations of Hinduism inspired ultimately by the revolutionary work of Sankara.

Another reaction towards Sankara in the West is represented by specifically Christian sentiments. Since Christianity by definition focusses above all on Christ; and since Christ is a personal figure—thus implying the personal character of God—there is disquiet at the transcendence of the *Isvara* contained in Sankara's account of ultimate reality. It is also a theme in many modern Hindu writings, *e.g.*, those of ex-President Radhakrishnan, that ultimate reality lies beyond the conception of a personal Creator. There are those in the West, *e.g.*, the late Paul Tillich in his expositions of a new Christian theology, who would seem to be in close agreement with this idea. But on the other hand, the great bulk of Christian theologians are, doubtless inevitably, wedded to a picture of ultimate reality very different from that delineated in Sankara's writings.

My own view is that these issues will be resolved in the process of the dialogue between religions. I do not think that the divergences between different schools of thought and spiritual traditions can be glossed over. Sankaracharya himself would not have approved of such a glossing over. He was a great reformer, a tremendous philosopher and exegete; and he was concerned to stake out a true picture of spiritual reality, in distinction from other viewpoints. It follows therefore that he will remain a central human exponent of religious ideas and will thus play a vital role in the dialogue of religions and ideologies to which I have referred.

SANKARA—ADVAITISM AND BHAKTI

By

AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

Devotion springs from man's feelings, from his yearning to rise above his limited condition towards the fullness of the Supreme. Devotion is born from the realization of our smallness. fanned into the fire of the desire to transcend this smallness and reach into the greater unity of love and light as embodied in the Divine. It takes the form of single-minded attention towards the brilliance of the aspired goal, renouncing all desire to continue working and living for our narrow-minded selves. Devotion brings out strongly the distinction between what is high and what is low and the quest to rise upward. With this a link is formed between the different levels of being. "Among things conducive to liberation, devotion (*bhakti*) alone holds the supreme place. The seeking after one's real nature is designated as devotion."[1] In the last sentence is found the emphasis of Sankara: to seek our real nature which in some inexplicable way has become lost to ourselves. To bring this out, Sankara took two approaches, one non-theistic and the other theistic. When Sankara asks us to search within to find that part of our nature which is true, permanent, and everlasting he takes the non-theistic approach, where through psychological analysis he brings to bear on the mind the different sides of our being. But Sankara also asks that we reach outward to the ground and source of the Universe. Here the theistic side gains prominence as a greater harmony with the world about us is brought out.

In the Vedantic conception of Isvara as Supreme Being, or Perfect Person, devotion is seen in a clear light. For Sankara, Isvara, as the Supreme Being, is that Person in whom all the limiting factors have been removed so that complete perfection remains. Negatively this means that "Isvara is ever free from *avidya*",[2] or ignorance, that the darkness which arises through confusion is totally removed. Those factors of personality causing blindness cease to have the power to influence such a being.

Positively, Isvara is the embodiement of freedom, joy, and compassion. "He identifies himself with the whole world",[3] and with his great compassion and loving heart witnesses all about Him. Isvara is mysteriously and inexpressibly bound to the world in which He rules and expresses His power, yet He is ever free. The idea of Advaita morality "is gradually to replace the narrow view held by the *jiva* (individual soul) by one like that of the cosmic

1. Sankaracharya, *Vivekachudamani*, trans. Swami Madhavananda (Calcutta, 1966), p. 11.
2. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, II (London, 1962), p. 609.
3. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, (London, 1964) p. 366.

self, whose interests coincide with those of the universe."[4]

In contrast to Isvara, Sankara brings out the limited nature of the jiva bounded by *avidya.* Through confusion and blindness the individual has alienated himself from his true nature. As a person he is bounded by his ego, sunken under the veil of his own misunderstanding. It is this condition which disturbed Sankara, and towards which he offered his great philosophical system. He wished to free man from wrong views and attitudes so that he could regain contact with his essential reality. To bring mankind to the realization of the limitlessness of his true nature became Sankara's goal. Here conflict is reconciled, for the different sides of man's nature are seen not as being in conflict, but rather as belonging to different levels of the same being, grounded in the depths of Brahman. Similarly, Sankara gave back to India the harmony of contending views by showing that different systems of thought were also brought out from different levels and likewise needed to be seen in the light of the indeterminate. By asking of mankind that he search for the deepest roots of his being, of the immanent in himself, and also to search for the ground of the Universe, the transcendental, Sankara sought to give room to all levels of thought and temperament within and without. He did not ask that views and ideas be given up as worthless, as being blind. Rather, he asked of the aspirant that he only look farther to behold the truly permanent and unchanging reality lying in the midst of all that is.

To bring out the undivided essence of man's nature, Sankara emphasized the need of seeing the different levels of man's being in order to gain a truer understanding of himself. If this were done, it would be found that man was not divided from Isvara, that his essential nature was bound up with the entire world as was Isvara's. Here Sankara sought to remove the imagined distance between oneself and Isvara. "The jiva and Isvara are one, or more strictly, are not different."[5]

So long as man is bound up with the world, Isvara is his highest aim, the Perfect Person acting out of love and compassion completely devoid of the passions of lust and greed. To Isvara "the whole of existence is related as an object",[6] while the jiva finds himself wrongly bound to his narrow personality. In contrasting these two. Isvara and the individual, Sankara seeks to give man a fuller and more complete realization of his true self so that he grows into the larger world and acts through greater service and devotion. The aim is the reaching of perfection, where the limitations are completely overcome.

Human personality is seen by Sankara to be an organismic whole composed of many levels and standing upon a deeper ground. In the confusion of the many levels of man's being, ignorance causes small-mindedness and narrow outlooks. To bring this out Sankara takes great pains to show the distinction between the mind and the world. Here two levels of being meet, and in the encounter, as it were, our greatest perplexity arises. For the older Sankhya system, consciousness and the world were completely cut asunder, each being given an independent reality. The world was as real as consciousness, both everlasting. Sankara saw consciousness and the world as undivided, but each on a different level. Mind cannot explain matter, as matter cannot explain mind. They are different orders of being. Therefore it follows that the intellect's understanding of the world cannot be but its own abstractions and gleanings gathered from the world presented to it. Between the two there is the undivided involvement which the mind cuts asunder to bring forth its new creation. How this happens is a mystery, it is Maya. But this is not *avidya,* or ignorance. Ignorance is there when we deny this meeting of levels at a deeper synthesis, thinking the partial to be absolute.. Right understanding removes *avidya,*but the mystery ever remains. We cannot meet this difficulty with an explanation, for it would be completely one-sided—presupposing that mind is "above" matter. This Sankara would not have us do. Rather;

4. Ibid., p. 366.
5. Ibid., p. 364.

6. Ibid., p. 363.

see the two levels, know they are not totally distinct from each other, and understand that one does not explain the other. "It is a matter not requiring any proof that the object and the subject whose respective spheres are the notion of the 'Thou' (the Non-Ego) and the 'Ego' which are opposed to each other as much as darkness and light are, cannot be identified."[7] The abstractions created through the intellect, although directly related to the world, cannot explain it. And here is the ignorance: that man superimposes upon the world a scheme for understanding it. "There is no Ignorance outside the mind."[8]

Sankara is insistent as to the place of knowledge in man's search for the real. For him, we have somehow and inexplicably fallen into a confusion as to our true nature. He sees that limited views have caused blunderings and factions. Therefore the remedy is to see better so that one can walk better. The insistence on a better set of intellectual tools is to give greater clarity to the whole of life.

Sankara has very clearly shown that we have superimposed a false view of things upon what is. We have called the rope a snake and therefore stand in fear where fear need not arise. The confusion of misunderstanding has caused us to live a life not in correspondence with the truth of things. It is only when the superimposed view is seen as the mind's addition to the presented, that the error is removed.

For Sankara, the whole of creation is misjudged. Through ceaseless habit we have come to identify the whole of life by things around us, and do not see the truth that lies at the root of all this. Here Sankara asks for a deeper and more comprehensive view of things, and to understand the limits of our set ways. He asks us not to stop with any of the limited and partial views, but constantly to press on to the more and more comprehensive, until finally the transcendental is forced upon us.

The personal approach to reality as brought forth by Sankara has a negative as well as a positive side. Negatively, there are the limiting factors to be overcome, the tendencies which cause conflict; suffering must be removed so that joy, bliss, and knowledge shine forth. "With the cessation of selfish action the brooding on the sense objects is stopped, which is followed by the destruction of desires. The destruction of desires is Liberation, and this is considered as Liberation-in-Life."[9]

The positive realization is clearly brought out again and again by Sankara. "The whole universe, being the effort of the real Brahman, is in reality nothing but Brahman."[10] "Brahman is Existence, Knowledge, Infinity, pure, supreme, self-existent, eternal, and indivisible Bliss, not different from the individual soul and devoid of interior and exterior."[11] In speaking on one who has realized his true nature Sankara says that such a person "with his mind steeped in the ocean of Existence and Bliss Absolute, roamed, verily purifying the whole world."[12] The *Vivekachudamani* ends with this *shloka*: "For those who are afflicted, in the way of the world, by the burning pain due to the (scorching) sunshine of threefold misery, and who through delusion wander about in a desert in search of water—for them here is the triumphant message of Sankara pointing out, within easy reach, the soothing ocean of nectar, Brahman, the One without a second—to lead them on to Liberation!"[13]

But the later followers of Sankara took a greater interest in the negative side of personal realization, giving greater and greater emphasis to the factors of personal life which have to be overcome and burned out. As a result the tendency arose to turn away from the world, which when wrongly seen feeds desires and passions. They had neglected the attitude of final realization where freedom and spontaneity become the natural way of being.

7. *The Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana with the commentary of Sankara*, trans. George Thibaut (New York, 1962), p. 3.
8. Sankaracharya, *Vivekachudamani*, p. 67.
9. Ibid., p. 124.
10. Ibid., p. 91.
11. Ibid., p. 89.
12. Ibid., p. 222.
13. Ibid., p. 223.

Because of the tendency to turn away from the world brought out by later Advaitins, Ramanuja and other interpreters of the Vedanta brought forth new views to attempt to correct this one-sideness and give greater clarity to man's vision. This was not a deviation but an enhancement of Sankara's basic position: the emphasis was turned towards the richness of the world of the many. Spiritually this meant the realization of the feeling of identity between oneself and God. Within each individual soul is to be found that part which is the same as the Supreme Soul (Isvara). Affection and yearning growing into love and devotion towards the Divine as the all-encompassing gains a prominent place. The distinction between things is held although all experiences based on objective and subjective factors are fused in the transcendental experience of Divine Union. By maintaining an accent on some forms of distinction so long as the transcendent experience does not take over, action and service gain a more conspicuous place. Sankara's philosophy allows this, in fact it fully supports ethical action as leading to the supreme identity. Ramanjua's *bhakti marga* followed and affirmed Sankara's emphasis. "Action in the form of Divine Service develops into a steady and continuous loving devotion of the Supreme and as such in all stages of life action is of great ethical value."[14]

14. Anima Sen Gupta, *A Critical Study of the Philosophy of Ramanuja* (Varanasi. 1967) p. xxxii.

GREAT MINDS ON THE GREAT MASTER

VIVEKANANDA.

I have neither the time nor the inclination to describe to you the hideousness that came in the wake of Buddhism. The most hideous ceremonies, the most horrible, the most obscene books that human hands ever wrote or the human brain even conceived, the most bestial forms that ever passed under the name of religion, have all been the creation of degraded Buddhism.

But India has to live, and the spirit of the Lord descended again. He who declared "I will come whenever virtue subsides", came again, and this time the manifestation was in the South, and up rose that young Brahmin of whom it has been declared that at the age of sixteen he had completed all his writings; the marvellous boy Shankaracharya arose. The writings of this boy of sixteen are the wonders of the modern world, and so was the boy. He wanted to bring back the Indian world to its pristine purity, but think of the amount of the task before him....The Tartars and the Baluchis and all the hideous races of mankind came to India and became Buddhists, and assimilated with us, and brought their national customs and the whole of our national life became a huge stage of the most horrible and the most bestial customs. That was the inheritance which that boy got from the Buddhists, and from that time to this the whole work in India is a re-conquest of this Buddhistic degradation by the Vedanta. It is still going on, it is not yet finished. Shankara came, a great philosopher, and showed that the real essence of Buddhism and that of the Vedanta are not very different, but that the disciples did not understand the Master and have degraded themselves, denied the existence of the soul and of God and have become atheists. That was what Shankara showed and all the Buddhists began to come back to the old religion.

The greatest teacher of the Vedanta philosophy was Shankaracharya. By solid reasoning he extracted from the Vedas the truths of Vedanta, and on them built up the wonderful system of Jnana that is taught in his commentaries. He unified all the conflicting descriptions of Brahman and showed that there is only one Infinite Reality. He showed too that as man can only travel slowly on the upward road, all the varied presentations are needed to suit his varying capacity. We find something akin to this in the teachings of Jesus, which he evidently adapted to the different abilities of his hearers. First he taught them of a Father in heaven and to pray to him. Next he rose a step higher and told them, "I am the vine, you are the branches", and lastly he gave them the highest truth: "I and my Father are one", and "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you". Shankara taught that three things were the great gifts of God: (1) human body, (2) thirst after God and (3) a teacher who can show up the light. When these three great gifts are ours, we may know that out redemption is at hand. Only knowledge can

free and save up, but with knowledge must go virtue.

*

Books cannot teach God, but they can destroy ignorance; their action is negative. To hold to the books and at the same time open the way to freedom is Shankara's great achievement.

*

Shankaracharya had caught the rhythm of the Vedas, the national cadence. Indeed I always imagine that he had some vision such as mine when he was young and recovered the ancient music that way. Anyway, his whole life's work is nothing but that, the throbbing of the beauty of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

(Extracts from *Complete Works*).

ANNIE BESANT.

(The) proclamation (of Buddha) was not made primarily for India. It was given in India, because India is the place whence the great religious revelations go forth by the will of the Supreme. Therefore was He born in India, but His law was specially meant for nations beyond the bounds of Aryavarta, that they might learn a pure morality, a noble ethic disjoined—because of the darkness of the age—from all the complicated teachings which we find in connection with the subtle, metaphysical Hindu faith.

Hence you find in the teaching of the Lord Buddha two great divisions; one a philosophy meant for the learned, then an ethic disjoined from the philosophy so far as the masses are concerned, noble and pure and great, yet easy to be grasped. For the Lord knew that we were going into an age of deeper and deeper materialism, that other nations were going to arise, that India for a time was going to sink down for other nations to rise above her in the scale of nations. Hence was it necessary to give a teaching of morality fitted for a more materialistic age, so that even if nations would not believe in the Gods they might still practise morality and obey the teachings of the Lord. In order also that this land might not suffer loss, in order that India itself might not lose its subtle metaphysical teachings and the widespread belief among all classes of people in the existence of the Gods, and their part in the affairs of men, the work of the great Lord Buddha was done. He left morality built upon a basis that could not be shaken by any change of faith, and, having done His work, passed away. Then was sent another Great One, overshadowed by the power of Mahadeva, Shri Shankaracharya, in order that by His teaching He might give, in the Advaita Vedanta, the philosophy which would do intellectually what morally the Buddha had done, which intellectualy would guard spirituality and allow a materialistic age to break its teeth on the hard nut of a flawless philosophy. Thus in India metaphysical religion triumphed, while the teaching of the Blessed One passed from the Indian soil, to do its noble work in lands other than the land of Aryavarta, which must keep unshaken its belief in the Gods, and where highest and lowest alike must bow before their power. That is the real truth; about this much disputed question as to the teaching of the ninth Avatara (Buddha), the fact was that His teaching was not meant for His birthplace, but was meant for other younger nations that were rising up around, who did not follow the Vedas, but who yet needed instruction in the path of righteousness; not to mislead them but to guide them, was His teaching given. But, as I say, and as I repeat, what in it might have done harm in India had it been left alone was prevented by the coming of the great Teacher of Advaita. You must remember, that His name has been worn by man after man, through century after century; but the Shri Shankaracharya on whom was the power of Mahadeva was born but a few years after the passing away of the Buddha, as the records of the Dwaraka Math show plainly—giving date after date backward, until they bring His birth within sixty or seventy years of the passing away of Buddha.

—*Avataras.*

Margaret Noble (Nivedita).

"Whenever the *dharma* decays, and when that which is not *dharma*-prevails, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the firm establishment of the national righteouiness I am born again and again." So says, the *Bhagavat Gita* and never was any prophecy more conclusively vindicated than this, by the appearance of the Sankaracharya, early in the ninth century after Christ......

This Wonderful boy—for he died at the age of thirty two—was born at the end of the eighth century, and had already completed a great mission when most men were still dreaming of the future.

The characteristic product of Oriental culture is always a commentary (on the earlier Scriptures). By this form of literature the future is knit firmly to the past, and though the dynamic power of the connecting idea may be obscure to the foreigner, it is clearly and accurately conveyed to the Eastern mind itself. By writing a new commentary on a given *sutra*, the man of genius has it in his power to re-adjust the relationship between a given question and the whole of the current opinion. Hence it is not surprising to find that the masterpiece of Sankaracharya's life was a commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras*......

The whole of the national genius awoke once more in Sankaracharya. Amidst all the brilliance and luxury of the age,in spite of the rich and florid taste of the Puranic period, his soul caught the mystic whisper of the ancient rhythm of the Vedic chants, and the dynamic power of the faith to lead the soul to super-consciousness, became for him the secret of every phase of Hinduism. He was on fire with the love of the Vedas. His own poems have something of their classical beauty and vigour, and his books may almost be described as chains of quotations from the most piercing and comprehensive sentences of the Upanishads, to which he has contributed links and rivets.

Sankaracharya wandered, during his short life, from his birth place in the South as far as the Himalayas, and everything that he came across in his travels related itself to the one focus and centre in his mind. He accepted each worship, even that from which he was at first adverse, but always because he found that the great mood of One-without-a-second was not only the Vedic, but also the Puranic goal.

This is the doctrine that he expresses in his twelve epoch-making commentaries, especially in his crowning work, the commentary on Vedanta Sutras. And this idea, known as the Advaita Philosophy, constitutes, for the rest of the Hindu Period, the actual unity of India.

Western people can hardly imagine a personality such as that of Sankaracharya. In the course of so few years to have nominated the founders of no less than ten great religious orders, of which four have fully retained their prestige to the present day; to have acquired such a mass of Sanskrit learning as to create a distinct philosophy, and impress himself on the scholarly imagination of India in a pre-eminence that twelve hundred years have not sufficed to shake; to have written poems whose grandeur makes them unmistakable, even to the foreign and unlearned ear; and at the same time to have lived with his disciples in all the radiant joy and simple pathos of the saints—this is greatness that we may appreciate, but cannot understand.....

The work of Sankaracharya was the re-linking of popular practice to the theory of Brahman, the stern infusion of mythological fancies with the doctrine of the Upanishads. He took up and defined the current catchwords—*maya*, *karma*, re-incarnation, and others—and left the terminology of Hinduism what it is today. His complete appropriation by this nation only shows that he is in perfect unison with its thought and aspiration.

—*The Web of Indian Life.*

Paul Deussen (Kiel, Germany).

The system of Vedanta as founded on the Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras and accompanied by Sankara's commentaries on them—equal in rank to Plato and Kant—

is one of the most valuable products of the genius of mankind in his researches of the eternal truth............ The conclusion is that the Jeeva being neither a part nor a different thing, nor a variation of the Brahman must be the Paramatman, fully and totally himself, a conclusion made equally in the Vedanta by Sankara, by the Platonic Plotinus, and the Kantian Schopenhaur. But Sankara in his conclusions, goes, perhaps more fully than any of them.

CHARLES JOHNSTONE

(*English Philosopher.*)

What shall we say then of Master Sankara ? Is he not the guardian of the sacred waters, who by his commentaries has hemmed about against all impurities of Time's jealousy, first the mountain-tarns of the *Upanishads*, then the serene forest lake of the *Bhagavad Gita* and last, the deep reservoir of the *Sutras*, adding from the generous riches of his wisdom, lively fountains and lakelets of his own, the *Crest—Jewel* the *Awakening and Discernment.*

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.

I have mentioned in this letter the names of some kings and dynasties who lived their brief life of glory and then disappeared and were forgotten. But a more remarkable man arose in the south, destined to play a more vital part in India's life than all the kings and emperors. This young man was known as Shankaracharya. Probably he was born about the end of the eighth century. He seems to have been a person of amazing genius. He set about reviving Hinduism. He fought against Buddhism—fought with his intellect and arguments.

Shankaracharya's record is a remarkable one. Buddhism, which had been driven south from the north, now almost disappears; from India. Hinduism becomes dominant all over the country. The whole country is stirred up intellectually by Shankara's books and commentaries and arguments. Not only does he become the great leader of the Brahman class, but he seems to catch the imagination of the masses. It is an unusual thing for a man to become a great leader chiefly because of his powerful intellect, and for such a person to impress himself on millions of people and on history. Great soldiers and conquerors seem to stand out in history. They become popular or are hated, and sometimes they mould history. Great religious leaders have moved millions and fired with enthusiasm, but always this has been on the basis of faith. The emotions have been appealed to and have been touched.

It is difficult for an appeal to the mind and to the intellect to go far. Most people unfortunately do not think : they feel and act according to their feelings. Yet Shankara's appeal was to the mind and intellect and to reason. It was not just the repetition of a dogma contained in an old book. Whether his argument was right or wrong is immaterial for the moment. What is interesting is his intellectual approach to religious problems, and even more so to the success he gained in spite of this method of approach.

—Glimpses of World History.

The Vedanta system arising out of the Upanishads developed and took many shapes and forms, but was always based on a monistic philosophy of the universe. On the foundation of the early Vedanta, Shankara (or Shankaracharya), built a system which is called the Advaita Vedanta or non-dualist Vedanta. It is this philosophy which represents the dominating philosophic outlook of Hinduism to-day.

How the Absolute Soul, the Atman, pervades everything, how the one appears as the many, and yet retains its wholeness, for the Absolute is indivisible, all these cannot be accounted for by the process of logical reasoning, for our minds are limited by the finite world. Finite individuals cannot imagine the infinite without limiting it ; they can only form limited and objective conceptions of it. Yet even these finite forms and concepts rest ultimately in the Infinite and Absolute. Hence the form of religion becomes a relative affair and each individual has liberty to form such conceptions as he is capable of.

Shankara accepted the Brahminical organization of social life on the caste basis, as representing the collective experience and wisdom of the race. But he held that any person belonging to any caste could attain the highest knowledge.

There is about Shankara's attitude and philosophy a sense of world negation and withdrawal from the normal activities of the world in search of that freedom of the self which was to him the final goal for every person. There is also a continual insistence on self-sacrifice and detachment.

And yet Shankara was a man of amazing energy and vast activity. He was no escapist retiring into his shell or into a corner of the forest, seeking his own individual perfection and oblivious of what happened to others. Born in Malabar in the far south of India, meeting innumerable people, arguing, debating, reasoning, convincing, and filling them with a part of his own passion and tremendous vitality, he was evidently a man who was intensly conscious of his mission, a man who looked upon the whole of India from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas as his field of action and as something that held together culturally and was infused by the same spirit, though this might take many external forms. He strove hard to synthesize the diverse currents that were troubling the mind of the India of his day and to build a unity of outlook out of that diversity. In a brief life of thirty-two years he did the work of many long lives and left such an impress of his powerful mind and rich personality on India that it is very evident today. He was a curious mixture of a philosopher and a scholar, an agnostic and a mystic, a poet and a saint, and, in addition to all this, a practical reformer and an able organizer......

There is a significance about (the) long journeys of Shankara throughout this vast land at a time when travel was difficult and the means of transport very slow and primitive. It would seem that Shankara wanted to add to the sense of national unity and common consciousness. He functioned on the intellectual, philosophical and religious planes and tried to bring about a greater unity of thought all over the country. He functioned also on the popular plane in many ways, destroying many a dogma and opening the door of his philosophic sanctuary to everyone who was capable of entering it.

—*Discovery of India.*

DR. C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

Sri Shankaracharya was almost unique in the history of thought ; he combined in himself the attributes of a poet, a logician, a devotee and a mystic as well as being the architect of the monistic system of philosophy that bears his name. He was an inspired poet whose appeal was, in turn, to every human feeling and sentiment. His descriptions of nature and his appraisal of human and divine personality reached the summit of art, and his command over the *navarasas* (nine kinds of poetic flavour or sentiments) was superb.

At the same time, in his commentaries on the *prasathanatraya* (the three bases of Vedanta, *viz.*, the *Upanishadas*, *Brahma-sutras* and the *Gita*), he displayed a rare faculty of relentlessly logical and concatenated argument and refutation, and such subtlety of reasoning as has been rarely surpassed in the philosophical writings of the world. He vindicated and firmly established the Advaita philosophy which has been described as one of the supreme achievements of Hinduism.

Shankara was simultaneously the author of some of the sweetest lyrics like *Saundarya-lahari*, which are devoted to the description of the personal Godhead in several manifestations.................

In the *Vivekachudamani* Shankara says : " Deliverance is not achieved by repeating the word ' Brahman' but by directly experiencing Brahman."

Having proceeded so far, Shankara thereafter expounds the view that the *nirakara* (formles) Absolute becomes *akaravat* or embodied for the individual worshipper as a personal *saguna* God which is but a form in which the Absolute can be comprehended by the finite mind.

The religion of a personal God is not a mere dogma but is a product of realization and experience. As the end of religion is *sakshatkara* , what is termed *bhakti* is a striving for this *sakshatkara* or realization by means of a personal God or a symbol, *pratika*, which may be an image, a painting or an object in nature. It will thus be seen that Shankara does not exclude or expel the framework of the external world. This is an aspect which is not always understood by those who deal with the Vedanta system...

It may be observed that similar conception (about the oneness of the individual soul and the Absolute) and thoughts have occurred to men and women in many other countries and in other ages. St. Catherine

of Genoa exclaims, " My ' me ' is God, nor do I recognize any other ' me ' except God Himself " ; and the Sufi saint, Bayazid stated, " I went from God to God, until they cried from ' me ' in ' me ', ' Oh thou I'. ". When someone knocked at the saint's door and asked " Is Bayazid here ? " his answer was " Is anybody here except God ? "

In that remarkable compilation of Aldous Huxley entitled *The Perennial Philosophy* occurs the following passage : " That art thou. Behold but one in all things, God within and God without. There is a way to reality in and through the world, and there is a way to reality in and through the soul. But the best way is that which leads to the Divine ground simultaneously in the perceiver and in that which is perceived. "

That inspired medieval philosopher, Ruysbroeck, has stated : " The image of God is found essentially and personally in all mankind. In this way we are all one, intimately united in our external image which is the image of God and the source inus of all our life."

Perhaps, however, one of the truest successors of Shankara was Spinoza. According to him the totality of all existing things is God. God, according to him, is not a cause outside of things, which passes over into things and works upon things from without. He is immanent, dwelling within, working from within, penetrating and impregnating all things. In this short treatise, Spinoza utters the truth as manifested to him : " Nature consists of infinite attributes. To its essence pertains existence so that outside it there is no other essence or existence. It thus coincides exactly with the essence of God."

What may be called the Shankara system has thus pervaded and influenced not only all aspects of Indian thought but has had significant repercussions amongst medieval Christian saints, Sufi divines, and more recent thinkers like Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. There is, furthermore, a growing body of scientific thinkers, who, confronted by the phenomena and development of nuclear, atomic and cosmic theories, feel irresistibly drawn to Shankara's enunciations as the most legitimate and satisfactory explanation of the universe, physical psychological and para-psychological.

The special glory of Shankara is that over and above being the protagonist of the monistic approach, he is author of innumerable *stotras* (hymns) as already stated. The *jnana* of Shankara is not a cold study of books but a warm-hearted striving to realize the truth, which, when turned towards a personal deity, becomes *bhakti.* Shankara is as insistent as Buddha on the supreme importance of ethics as one of the fundamentals of spiritual life. But his outlook on *karma*, on temple worship and on domestic ceremonial is synthetic and harmonious, and not at all destructive. (*Vedanta for East and West VIII*-6)

RAJAJI

Sri Sankara crossed the ocean of Maya as easily as one steps over a small irrigation channel in the field. He wrote a number of Vedantic works for imparting the knowledge of the Self. He composed a number of hymns to foster the sense of devotion in the hearts of men and this I consider to be his greatest service.........If Sri Aadi Sankara himself, who drank the ocean of knowledge as easily as one sips water from the palm of one's hand, sang hymns to develop devotion, it is enough to show that knowledge and devotion are one. No other testimony is needed. Sri Sankara has packed into the " Bhaja Govindam " song the substance of all the Vedantic works that he wrote and he has set the truth of the union of devotion and knowledge to melodious music which delights the ear........... The Goddess of Learning Herself speaks through Sankara, beloved of her........... He spoke about what he thoroughly knew...... Sri Sankara's teaching is not only for the Sannyaasins who have renounced the World. He sings also for the ordinary men who eke out their livelihood with the labour of their hands......Sri Sankara speaks from experience...... Sri Sankara says that by no other means can one find the bliss that one can find through renunciation. You must accept this as true when one so great as Sankara declares it. He has experienced the bliss of renunciation and preaches it to others...... The great Acharya who had attained the highest wisdom has blended devotion, wisdom and austerities.

—*Bhaja Govindam.*

SANKARA AND HIS UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO TEMPLE WORSHIP

By

A. S. NATARAJA AYYAR

Regarding the history of Temple Worship, it is the view of scholars that images and temples did not exist in the Vedic period. (Macdonell : *Vedic Mythology*, page 18, Reprint edition, 1963). When the Vedic literature came to be harmonised into the two Vedic symptoms of exegesis—the Purva Mimamsa of Jamini and the Uttara Mimamsa of Badarayana, the existence of the Devatas, their name and form claimed the attention of the sages. Jamini had to deal in essence with the Vedic sacrifice in its various aspects and while so doing he discussed the existence of the Devatas with a name and form in the Devata-Adhikarana (Jaimini's Purva Mimamsa Sutras, Adhyaya IX Pada, 1, Sutras 6 to 10). Badarayana also discussed the identical question in his Devata-Adhikarana in his Brahma Sutras. (Adhyaya I, Pada 3, Sutras 26 to 33). Sabara was the great Bhashyakara of the Sutras of Jaimini and by his time temples were slowly coming into existence and prominence. Jaimini in the Devata-Adhikarana came to the conclusion that it is the Vedic Yaga which gives the fruit of the sacrifice, *viz.*, Svarga or any other desired result and not the worship of the Devata. The Bhashya of Sabara on this Adhikarana is unique. In our Sastras there would be in every discussion the question of the Purvapaksha (the opponent's view point) and the answer of the Siddhanta. In this Adhikarana who could be the Purvapakshin ? The Purvapakshin is the upholder of the worship of the Deity in the temple—the new temple now rising in popular estimation. To the bow of his argument the Purvapakshin has three arrows. The argument based on the Smrti, the argument based on Custom, and the argument based on the indicatory texts of the Veda are elaborated. The Purvapakshin argues the case of the Temple Worship in its five aspects : (1) The Deity has a form ; (2) The Deity owns wealth ; (3) The Deity takes *Bhog* or food placed before it ; (4) The Deity is pleased ; and (5) The Deity yields the fruit of the worship to the worshipper, the fruit in the form of Svarga or any other lesser desired result and this exactly as the Vedic Sacrifice.

To this the Siddhantin—rather Sabara himself—answers. Sabara states that the Purvapaksha argument on Custom is based on Smrti and that the Purvapakshin's argument on Smrti is based on the indicatory texts of the Veda and that it would be sufficient if the Siddhantin (Sabara) gives his answer to the indicatory Vedic texts. And now Sabara comes into close grip with the Vedic indicatory texts. To take one example there is the Vedic text meaning, " O Indra, I take hold of thy right hand." The Purvapakshin argues that Indra is the name—*Nama* and the hands indicate the *Rupa* or form and that the worshipper is praying to Indra for his (Indra's) help. Sabara, the Siddhantin argues that the Vedic text only means that the sacrificer should perform the Vedic Yaga to Indra and that, for securing his help and thereby get the fruit of the sacrifice. Then where does Indra rest ? According to Sabara and the Siddhantin Indra rests and

is located in the *Mantra* uttered by the sacrificer to Indra ; and therefore Indra is a Devata in the heart of the *Mantra, i.e.*, Indra is a *Mantra-mayi-Devata*.

It is at this juncture in the history of India and in the history of Temple Worship that Sankara appears and uses all his arguments in favour of Temple Worship then growing in popular estimation. The Mimamsaka Sabara and the Vedantin Sankara are both followers and upholders of the same Vedic text. And Sankara has to give the answer only in strict terms of the linguistic, logical and philosophical interpretation of the Vedic Text.

Sankara's answer to Sabara is elaborately given in his (Sankara's) Bhashya in the Devata Adhikarana of the Brahma Sutras, Adhyaya I, Pada 3, Sutras 26 to 33. This part of Sankara Bhashya and the super-commentaries thereon is unique and should be read as a whole. This is a philosophical treat of the highest excellence.

Sankara's answer ranges mainly under 5 heads : (1) Sabara, according to Sankara, strays away from the literal meaning of the Vedic text into some other metaphorical or suggested meaning. In the text quoted above about Indra, Sankara stresses on adhering to the literal meaning and states that as a *Sabda pramanika* as Sabara admittedly is, he could not get away from the literal meaning unless forced otherwise. Following the rules of interpretation formulated by the Mimamsaka about Arthavadas, Sankara argues that, when the Veda text is neither an *Anuvada* nor a *Gunavada*, the only right and reasonable course is to take the text as a *Vidyamana Arthavada* i.e. that the meaning conveyed is exactly as the words of the Vedic text indicate. By this unanswerable rule of Mimamsa Interpretation, Sankara has a triumph over the adversary, using his (adversary's) own weapons.

(2) The Vedas enjoin the fixing of the Devata in the mind of the sacrificer when he is offering the *havis* or sacrificial offering. This is a psychological impossibility according to Sankara unless the Devata has a *Nama* and a *Rupa*.

(3) Philosophically Sankara further argues that the name and the object denoted by the name should be and are in fact two different entities. The name of the Deity cannot exhaust all its content. The Deity's form is there as described in the Vedic texts and the form should be different from the mere name.

(4) Sankara argues on the three Pramanas used by the Purvapakshin and writes indeed a short and lucid *Pramana Sastra* and explains *inter alia* how the Smrtis, Itihasas and Puranas are valid *in toto*.

(5) Lastly the usage in daily life also Sankara argues, should be the basis of one's activities. With these 5 arguments Sankara wins the field against Sabara.

Looking at Sabara and Sankara in a historical, setting, Sabara stood on the parting of the ways. Sabara had to choose between the Vedic sacrifice on the one hand and the Temple worship in its rising estimation on the other. And Sabara cast his vote in favour of the Vedic Sacrifice. Sankara rose at a time when, among others, the Pallavas had exhibited their skill in the construction of temples ; and Sankara lived, passed his best days and ascended the Central Seat of Wisdom and had his *Samadhi*—all in *Kanchipuram*, the city of temples and once the capital of a flourishing South Indian Empire. Sankara never said a word against the Vedic sacrifice; in fact, Sankara encouraged it in all ways as the firm, and indeed for all except the rare few, as the only stepping stone to Gnana Marga and the attainment of Brahman.

But Sankara raised Temple—Worship to its proper and unique position as the medium to reach Brahman. The Apostle of Nirguna worship as Sankara is styled became in fact the Defender of the Faith of the millions of Bharata Varsha and thus placed the temple worshipper on a par with the Vedic sacrificer and this enabled him (the temple worshipper) to raise his head aloft and not bend low in the assembly of the wise. Thus in the hands of Sankara, Karma and Bhakti were shown to reach the same goal as Gnana.

The above is very well brought out by Prof. Kuppuswamy Sastrigal in his telling language :

" Many scholars know well that Sankara is the great poet on the Supreme Brahman ; Sankara is the Nirguna Maha Kavi ; and the best illustration of this observation can be easily found in the Superb prose-poetry of his Brahma Sutra Bhashya. Often we find Sankara climbing down from the highest metaphysical peak of Nirguna Brahman to enjoy the delight of playing the role of a great *Bhakta* through his poetic outpourings of devotion. And in this mood Sri Sankara might well be imagined to have been prompt-

ed by the same spirit which influenced the Supreme Lord to incarnate himself in human form as Sri Rama or Sri Krishna—the same desire perhaps to perfect the wholeness of His being and establish His title to the rank of *Purushottama*" (Forward to *Vishnu Sahasranama—Sankara Bhashya* with Tamil meaning—Kamakoti Kosasthanam Series—Madras).

Sankara's influence ran further into unexpected channels. Ramanuja coming centuries later followed faithfully Sankara's Brahma Sutra Bhashya in his Sri Bhashya on the Devata Adhikarana. Kings vied with one another in building temples and in endowing them amply. The wealthy also made suitable smaller endowments. The kings and the wealthy created endowments for Vedic recitations in temples on a par with those for the Saivaite and Vaishnavite Tamil hymns. The properties endowed were secure and as the Deities were Jurisdic Personalities in Law they were sacrosanct. In fact trustees were not necessary for creating an endowment for a Deity. Servants were necessary only for managing the Deity's property. As a lasting proof of the faith of Sankara in temple worship, we find Sankara composing several hymns in favour of the Deities, the Ishta Devata of the worshippers. Sankara in fact became a *Shanmata-Sthapana Acharya*. Thus is Sankara's contribution to Temple Worship in the field of Philosophy, Law and Religion.

DEVOTION TO THE GURU

(Selections from Sri Sankara's *Gurvashtakam*)

Beautiful form, handsome life-partner, material affluence—of what avail are these, when the mind does not cling to the lotus feet of the Guru?

Of what use is a household, which otherwise has everything to make it perfect, like a good wife, progeny and kinsmen—when the mind does not attach itself to the lotus feet of the Guru ?

Where after all could all the learning in Vedic and other scriptural lore lead one to, what is the ultimate use of one's talent in composing poetry and prose—when the mind does not cling to the Guru's lotus feet ?

Honour at home, honour abroad—all this serves only to inebriate one with the ego of righteous living, when the mind is not bound up with the lotus of the Guru's feet.

A GARLAND OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(SELECTIONS FROM SRI SANKARA'S *Prasnottara-Ratna-Malika*)

Question.—Which is it that is worthy of being learnt ?

Answer.—The words of the preceptor.

Q.—Who is the preceptor ?

A.—He who has known the truth and who cares for the spiritual welfare of his disciples.

Q.—Which is it that should be done quickly ?

A.—The cutting of the bond of the chain of life and death.

Q.—Which is the seed for the tree of spiritual salvation ?

A.—The understanding of things in their true perspective and the exhibition of that understanding in action.

Q.—Which has a soothing effect ?

A.—*Dharma* or the performance of righteous deeds.

Q.—Who is the pure man ?

A.—He whose mind is free from blemish.

Q.—Who is the learned ?

A.—He who has knowledge.

Q.—Which is poison ?

A.—The disregarding of the advice of elders.

Q.—Which is it that interests in life ?

A.—Meditation whether there is really anything at all to interest us in life.

Q.—Which is it that should be desired ?

A.—A life dedicated to the good and welfare of one's self as well as others.

Q.—Who are the real thieves ?

A.—The objects which allure the senses.

Q.—Which is the binding cord of life ?

A.—Desire.

Q.—Who is the real enemy ?

A.—Laziness.

Q.—Who is blinder than the blind ?

A.—He who has desires.

Q.—Who is the valorous one ?

A.—He who guards himself against vices.

Q.—Which is it that forms meet food for the ears ?

A.—The teachings of the sages.

Q.—How can respect be commanded ?

A.—By asking for no favours.

Q.—What is poverty ?

A.—Discontent.

Q.—Which is the highest living ?

A.—A life without blemishes.

Q.—What constitutes lack of knowledge ?

A.—Learning which is not put into practice.

Q.—Who is the wakeful ?

A.—He who has knowledge.

Q.—What is sleep ?

A.—Ignorance.

Q.—Which is unstable ?

A.—Youth, wealth and age.

Q.—Whose life is as soothing to others as the cool rays of the moon ?

A.—The life of good men.

Q.—Which is hell ?

A.—To have to live under the patronage of others.

Q.—What is happiness ?

A.—Renunciation for the sake of others.

Q.—Which is worthy of being achieved ?
A.—Being of help to others.
Q.—What results in dire consequences ?
A.—Pride.
Q.—What brings about real happiness ?
A.—The company of good men.

Q.—Who is supreme in getting rid of sorrow ?

A.—He who renounces all.
Q.—Which is worse than death ?
A.—Foolishness.
Q.—Which is priceless ?
A.—A timely gift.
Q.—Which is it that pricks one's conscience till death ?

A.—A sin committed on the sly.
Q.—For what is endeavour worth while ?
A.—Education, charity, and health.

Q.—Which should be made the object of endearment ?

A.—Mercy towards the helpless and the friendship of good and pious men.

Q.—Who cannot turn their minds into the right path ?

A.—The scoundrels, the ever-doubting, the pessimists and the ungrateful persons.

Q.—Who is the pious one ?
A.—He who is of good conduct.
Q.—Who can conquer the world ?
A.—Whoever has truth and patience.
Q.—Who is worshipped even by the gods ?
A.—He who is merciful.

Q.—By whom can living beings be subjugated ?

A.—By him whose words are full of truth and affection.

Q.—Which is the proper way for earning riches ?

A.—The path of virtue and justice.
Q.—Who is the blind man ?

A.—One who, though learned, does bad deeds.

Q.—Who is the deaf man ?
A.—Whoever does not listen to good advice.

Q.—Who is the dumb man ?
A.—Whoever cannot uttar good words at the proper moment.

Q.—Which is a gift ?
A.—That which is given unasked for.

Q.—Who is a friend ?
A.—Whoever prevents us from committing sin.

Q.—Which is beauty ?
A.—Good character.

Q.—What constitutes the beauty of the tongue ?

A.—Speaking the truth.
Q.—Which is as rare as a precious gem ?
A.—The four qualities collectively known as the *chaturbhadra, viz.*, Gift followed by soothing words, knowledge without pride, valour with mercy and forgiving, and wealth with sacrifice.

Q.—Which is to be pitied ?
A.—Selfish miserliness.
Q.—Which is praiseworthy ?
A.—The quality of being merciful towards other beings.

Q.—Whom do the wise men worship ?
A.—The naturally humble men.

Q.—At the sight of which sun will the lotus of our life bloom ?

A.—Real humility.
Q.—Who can conquer this world ?
A.—He who speaks gently and does good deeds.

Q.—Whom can disaster not overtake ?

A.—One who listens to the words of elders and one who is humble in behaviour.

Q.—Which is the fittest place to dwell in ?
A.—The neighbourhood of good men and the holy city of Benares.

Q.—Which is the place not fit to be lived in ?

A.—The neighbourhood of low people and the kingdom of a miserly ruler.

Q.—What can free a man from misery and sorrow ?

A.—A dutiful wife and wealth that can Indure.

Q.—Who deserves to be miserable ?
A.—He who has but will not give.
Q.—Which is despicable ?
A.—To beg of the lowly.

Q.—Who is more valorous than Rama ?
A.—One who is unaffected by Cupid's arrows.

Q.—Which should be contemplated upon both during day and night ?

A.—The holy feet of the Almighty, not this world and our life in it.

Q.—Who can be called blind, though possessing eyes ?

A.—The *Nastikas* or those who do not believe in the *Vedas*.

Q.—Which is the holiest among the sacred waters ?

A.—That which cleanses us of the dirt surrounding the mind.

Q.—What cannot be uttered by a good man ?

A.—Whatever is not truth and the faults of others.

Q.—Which is worthy of being acquired ?

A.—Learning, wealth, valour, fame and good deeds.

Q.—Which destroys all good qualities ?

A.—Miserliness.

Q.—Who is the real enemy ?

A.—Lust.

Q.—Which assembly should be avoided ?

A.—An assembly devoid of old and experienced councillors.

Q.—In what matters should one be careful in this world ?

A.—In regard to the service of the king.

Q.—Which is dearer to us than life ?

A.—The duties prescribed by heredity and the company of good men.

Q.—Which should be preserved ?

A.—Fame, chastity and one's own knowlodge.

Q.—Which is like the mythological creeper of plenty in this world ?

A.—The knowledge imparted to a good and deserving disciple.

Q.—What is the weapon which everyone possesses ?

A.—Reasoning.

Q.—Who is the mother of all ?

A.—The cow.

Q.—Which is the army ?

A.—Bravery.

Q.—Who is the God of Death ?

A.—Indifference.

Q.—Which is the abode of poison ?

A.—Vicious men.

Q.—Which is the worst of all pollutions ?

A.—Debt.

Q.—Which is the state of fearlessness ?

A.—Renunciation.

Q.—What begets fear ?

A.—The possession of wealth.

Q.—Which is rare to achieve ?

A.—Devotion to the Lord.

Q.—What is sin ?

A.—Cruelty to others.

Q.—Who is the most beloved of the gods ?

A.—He who does not feel injured in his mind and does not injure others.

Q.—What can enable a man to accomplish whatever he aims at ?

A.—Penance.

Q.—What produces penance ?

A.—Enlightenment.

Q.—Where does enlightenment reside ?

A.—With the person of knowledge.

Q.—Which is real enlightenment ?

A.—That which is attained through devotion and service to a teacher.

Q.—Who are the elders ?

A.—Those who have understood the correct import of the scriputres—though they may be young in age.

Q.—To one who is renowned which is worse than death ?

A.—Scandal.

Q.—Which is the root cause of happines ?

A.—The performance of good deeds.

Q.—Which is the root cause of misery ?

A.—Sin.

Q.—Who gets to the supreme state ?

A.—One who worships the Lord Sankara with devotion.

Q.—When is lying not a sin ?

A.—When it is uttered in due performance of one's duties.

Q.—What is one's duty ?

A.—Following the virtuous ones who excel in the traditional prescriptions.

Q.—Which is the strength of the pious men ?

A.—God.

Q.—Who is the pious man ?

A.—The every satisfied person.

Q.—Which is god ?

A.—Our own good deeds.

Q.—Who is the rich ?

A.—The ascetic.

Q.—Who is worthy of being served upon ?

A.—The giver.

Q.—Who is the giver ?

A.—He who gives to the receiver's heart's content.

Q.—Which is the greatest enjoyment ?

A.—Health.

Q.—Who enjoys the fruit of labour ?

A.—One who endeavours.

Q.—Who will not be affected by sin ?

A.—One who always meditates on God.

Q.—Which is difficult to perform ?

A.—The subjugation of the mind.

Q.—Who is the god of all the Universe ?

A.—*Sakti* in Her aspect as the *Jnanambika* or the Goddess Who is Embodiment of Knowledge.

Q.—Who is the protector of this Universe ?

A.—The Sun-God, *Surya,* as he is the giver of food to all the created beings in this world.

Q.—Who is the valiant man ?

A.—The protector of one who fears.

Q.—Who is a protector ?

A.—The true preceptor.

Q.—Who is the teacher of all the worlds ?

A.—The Lord Almighty.

Q.—Whence does knowledge come ?

A.—From Him, our Lord.

Q.—How can salvation be attained ?

A.—By devotion to Lord Mukanda.

Q.—Who is Mukunda ?

A.—He who helps us to overcome ignorance.

Q.—What is ignorance ?

A.—That which makes us forget the real nature of the self.

Q.—Who is free from sorrow ?

A.—One who has quelled anger.

Q.—Which is real happiness ?

A.—The inner laugh—not the visible outer one.

Q.—Who is the king ?

A.—He who has none else to equal him.

Q.—Who is a dog among men ?

A.—He who serves the lowly persons.

Q.—Who is the conqueror of *Maya* or the great illusion of this Universe ?

A.—The Lord Paramesvara.

Q.—Which is magic ?

A.—This very world.

Q.—Which is dream ?

A.—The affairs of this world.

Q.—Which is the ultimate Truth ?

A.—The *Parabrahman* or the Supreme Absolute.

Q.—Which is destroyed by knowledge?

A.—Untruth.

Q.—Which is it that cannot be stated as either true or false ?

A.—*Maya* or the *Appearance* of this world.

Q.—What lesson does *Maya* teach ?

A.—*Dvaita* or the dualistic nature of things.

Q.—Which is the real Truth ?

A.—*Advaita* or Non-dualism.

Q.—What feeds the body ?

A.—*Karma* or our own past actions.

Q.—Who is the giver of food ?

A.—Age.

Q.—Whom should the brahmin worship ?

A.—The Lord who resides in the *Gayatri,* in the Sun-God and in Fire.

Q.—Who is our visible God on earth ?

A.—One's mother.

Q.—Who is the teacher who should be worshipped ?

A.—One's father.

Q.—Which is it that destroys one's good pedigree ?

A.—Anything likely to cause anger in the minds of good and pious men.

Q.—Whose words will come true ?

A.—The words of one who observes truth and silence and is merciful.

Q.—What is the cause of this life ?

A.—Attachment to the objects of this world.

Q.—Who is worthy of being fed ?

A.—The hungry one.

Q.—Who is to be worshipped ?

A.—The incarnations of the Lord.

Q.—Who is the supreme God ?

A.—He who is both *Sankara* and *Narayana.*

Q.—Which is the fruit of devotion to God?

A.—Attainment of Heavenly Bliss.

Q.—What is liberation ?

A.—The destruction of ignorance.

Q.—Which is the origin and end of all the *Vedas* ?

A.—The Pranava *OM.*

BIRTHS TOO WELCOME

By

H. H. Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

शास्त्रं शारीरमीमांसा देवस्तु परमेश्वरः ।
आचार्यः शङ्कराचार्यः सन्तु मे जन्मनि जन्मनि ॥

All Sastras (scriptures) have been propounded to show the way to get rid of future births. But the *sloka* I have quoted above seems to contradict this universal desire to annul all future births. On the other hand, it seems to contain a prayer for any number of births in the future. But, the prayer also contains a three-fold condition. It says, "If, in every future birth, the sheet-ancher of my faith and understanding is the religion of the Upanishads, if the God I worship is Paramesvara Himself, if the Guru who will be my refuge is Sri Sankaracharya, it does not matter how many births, I am to take. May these three be granted to me in life after life."

Regarding the qualifications of an Acharya it has been laid down that he is one who teaches the meanings of the scriptures, puts them into practice himself, and establishes others in those disciplines.

Our Acharya traversed on foot all the 56 kingdoms of Bharathadesa and established the Advaita Tatva as the final truth of Vedanta. Prior to him, the Sankhyas propounded the theory of plurality of souls and denied a Paramatman. The Meemaamsakas, on the other hand, affirmed the superiority of observing Vedic rituals over *jnana* (knowledge as the means to *moksha* (Liberation). The Bauddhas said that there was no *satyavastu* (Ultimate Reality). The Jains advanced the *Sapta bhangi nyaya* and adopted a shifting criterion of truth. Thus, there were as many as 72 schools of thought. When the Acharya appeared on the scene, many of them were in conflict with one another. It was in this predicament that the *Eesaana of Sarva Vidyas* (Lord of Knowledge) took human form as Sankaracharya.

It is worthy of note that, when Buddhism, Jainism, the Saankhya, and the Meemaamsa systems of thought were prevalent and popular, in each case, the philosophies that were propounded prior to it, were still current. But after the advent of Acharya, all the earlier systems lost their hold on the minds of the people, and Advaita Vedanta, taught in the *mahaavaakyaas* of the Upanishads, gained universal acceptance. Other schools of Vedanta that arose and are prevalent in particular parts of our country, are only small deviations of Advaita. To Sri Sankara belongs the distinction of having liquidated all other anterior systems, vaidic and avaidic alike. So conclusively convincing was the *Advaita tatva*, which he established as *parama taatparya* (the supreme import) of the Upanishads, that other thinkers willingly gave up their differing views, and acquiesced in it, whole-heartedly. Great philosophers of foreign countries too were attracted to it in such a measure, that they expressed their undisguised admiration of its sublimity.

It is remarkable that our Acharya established the Upanishad truth of Advaita within the brief period when he was in his teens. This is a span of life very small compared to that of Sayanacharya, who, treading the path of Sri Sankara, wrote his monumental Bhashyas (Commentaries) on all the Vedas, and also to that of many other posterior Acharyas who promulgated one or the other of six paths of devotion proclaimed by our Acharya in the form of *Shanmata*, and thereby earning the distinction of being *Shanmatasthaapanacharya* (the stabiliser of the six Faiths).

(*From a Discourse of His Holiness.*)

SECTION IV

HIS HOLINESS

SRI KAMAKOTI JAGADGURU

People generally feel relieved at giving expression to their sorrows before God. Let the question of God hearing their plaints and removing their sorrow stand. The very act of expressing their difficulties is like a cure to afflicted hearts. They seek after a place where they can feel the divine and unburden themselves.

God is all-prevalent. Divinity is imbedded in every speck of this universe. But the generality is not able to grasp it. They think that divinity is pronounced in certain places.

If people flock around me it is not because they assess my intrinsic merit. They think that divinity is easier of grasp to them through me. They carry their tales of woe to me in the belief that their petitions are heard by God. The believing spirits who hanker after consolation flock around me and open out their hearts. They are consoled to a great measure even while they open out their hearts. Will it be proper for me to discourage such people from approaching me for the simple reason that it eats into my rest? What am I here for? This life is meant only to hear the sorrows of people and console them. Be it night or day, this body is meant only to alleviate the sufferings of people. It does not matter if my body is impaired by meeting auguished people and consoling them for hours on end. Whatever happens to my body in this process, it is this which gives strength to my heart.

There is nothing to feel elated about on seeing the people worshipping me. But when I reflect that it is worship to the God, who they think is approachable through me, I feel glad that there are so many who believe in a compassionate God who will hear them and remove their misery. I am glad at the un-reserved faith in God with which they vent out their difficulties. Whether I am godly or not, the faith of people in God which expresses itself on account of me overwhelms me. However much people seem to pester and bother me, it all only cheers me, originating as it does on their trust in God. Nobody need stand between me and the suffering hearts, on the score that it tells upon me. Far from weakening me, it is my source of strength.

—H.H. Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi

Photo: V. Meenakshisundaram

GRACE OF SANKARA INCARNATE

By

DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

Any one who has read the works of Sri Sankara would certainly want to know what sort of a person the great Master was. In all his extensive writings he nowhere makes any reference to himself.

The outlines of the story of Sankara's life could be gathered only from the *Sankara-Vijayas* and other narratives. In-spite of varying accounts in regard to some of the details, the image of the Master that one forms from these sources, taking into account also the grand teachings that are to be found in his own works, is that of a great spiritual leader, who renounced all worldly attachments even as a boy, who was a prodigy in scriptural lore and wisdom, who spent every moment of his life in the service of the masses of mankind by placing before them, through precept and practice, the ideal of the life divine, and who was a teacher of teachers, the universal *Guru*. Even as such a magnificent image is being formed, the doubt may arise in the minds of many: Is it possible that such a great one walked this earth? Is it possible that in a single ascetic frame was compressed several millennia of the highest spiritual human history?

This doubt is sure to be dispelled in the case of those who have had the good fortune of meeting His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati, the Sixty-eighth in the hallowed line of succession of Sankaracharyas to adorn the Kamakoti Pitha of Kanchi. Anyone who comes into the august presence of His Holiness cannot but recall to his mind the image of Adi Sankara, the immaculate sage who was divine and yet human, whose saving grace was universal in its sweep, and whose concern was for all—even for the lowliest and the last. For sixty-three years Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati has been fulfilling the noble spiritual mission entrusted by Adi Sankara to his successors bearing his holy name. Numerous are the ways in which he has given the lead for human upliftment through inner awakening. When one considers his life of ceaseless and untiring dedication to the task of stabilizing and promoting the renascent spirit of India so that humanity may be benefited thereby, one cannot but conclude that it is the unbounded Grace of Sankara that has assumed this new form in order to move the world one step higher on the ladder to universal perfection.

'Chandrasekarendra Sarasvati' is the *Sannyasa* name given to *Svaminathan* when he was barely thirteen. It was on the 20th of May, 1894, that Svaminathan was born in Villupuram (South Arcot District). His father, Subrahmanya Sastri, belonged to the Hoysala Karnataka Smarta Brahmana family which had migrated years earlier to the Tamil country and had settled in Chola-desa. Subrahmanya Sastri served as a teacher for some time, and then entered the Educational Service. At the time of Svaminathan's birth, he was at Villupuram. Svminathan's mother. Mahalakshmi, hailed from a family belonging to Icchangudi, a village near Tiruvaiyaru. An illustrious and saintly person connected with the family, Raja Govinda Dikshita of the

sixteenth century, was minister to the first Nayak King of Tanjavur; Dikshita popularly known as Ayyan, was responsible for many development projects in Chola-territory; his name is still associated with a tank, a canal, etc. (Ayyan Canal, Ayyan Kulam).

Svaminathan was the second child of his parents. He was named Svaminathan after the Deity of the family, the Lord Svaminatha of Svamimalai. Two incidents relating to this early childhood period are recorded by the Acharya himself in an article contributed to a symposium on *What life has taught me** This is how he has described these incidents.

A '*mara nai*' as they call it in Tamil or teddy cat (an animal which generally climbs on trees and destroys the fruits during nights) some how got into a room in the house and thrust its head into a small copper pot with a neck, which was kept in a sling and contained jaggery. The animal was not able to pull out its head and was running here and there in the room all through the night. People in the house and neighbours were aroused by the noise and thought that some thief was at his job. But, the incessant noise continued even till morning hours, and some bravados armed with sticks opened the door of the room and found the greedy animal. It was roped and tied to a pillar. Some experienced men were brought and after being engaged in a tug-of-war, they ultimately succeeded in removing the vessel from the head of the animal. The animal was struggling for life. It was at last removed to some spot to roam freely, I presume. The first experience of my life was this dreadful ocular demonstration born of greed causing all our neighbours to spend an anxious and sleepless night.

The next experience was a man in the street who entered into the house seeing me alone with tiny golden bangles upon which he began to lay his hands. I asked him to tighten the hooks of the bangles which had become loose and gave a peremptory and authoritative direction to him to bring them back repaired without delay. The man took my orders most obediently and took leave of me with the golden booty. In glee of having arranged for repairs to my ornament, I speeded to inform my people inside of the arrangement made by me with the man in the street who gave his name as Ponnusvami. The people inside hurried to the street to find out the culprit. But the booty had become his property true to his assumed name, Ponnusvami (master of gold)".

Reflecting on these experiences, the Acharya observes with characteristic humility: "I am prone to come to the conclusion that there lives none without predominantly selfish motives. But with years rolling on an impression, that too a superficial one true to my nature, is dawning upon me that there breathe on this globe some souls firmly rooted in morals and ethics who live exclusively for others voluntarily forsaking not only their material gains and comforts but also their own *sadhana* towards their spiritual improvement".

In the year 1900, Svaminathan was in the first standard in a school at Chidambaram. Sri M. Singaravelu Mudaliyar, the Assistant Inspector of Schools, visited the school on an inspection and discovered in the boy the makings of a genius. He asked him to read the Longman's English Reader prescribed for a higher standard: and Svaminathan read it remarkably well. At his instance Svaminathan was promoted to the third standard.

The *upanayanam* of the boy was performed in 1905 at Tindivanam to which place Subrahmanya Sastri had been transferred. It is significant that the Sixty-sixth Sankaracharya of Kamakoti Pitha, Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati, who was at the time touring in South Arcot District, sent his blessings; and it was he that later on literally captivated the boy, and chose him as successor to the holy seat: and it is also significant that Svaminathan came to bear the *sannyasa* name of the Sixty-sixth Acharya.

When Svaminathan was ten years of age, he was admitted in the Second Form in the Arcot American Mission School, Tindivanam. The prodigy that the boy was, he gave an excellent record of himself at

* *What Life Has Taught Me*. Series II, Bharatiyavidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1964, pp. 1—9.

school. He used to carry away many prizes, including the one for proficiency in the Bible studies. The teachers of the school naturally took a great liking for Svaminathan; they were proud of him and cited him to the other boys as a model student.

In 1906, when Svaminathan was studying in the Fourth Form, the school was arranging for a dialogue from Shakespeare's *King John.* The teachers who were responsible for fixing the participants in the dialogue could not find a suitable candidate from the age-group fixed for taking on the role of Prince Arthur, the central character in the play. The Headmaster who knew Svaminathan's extraordinary talents sent for the boy who was only twelve then and assigned the role to him. After obtaining permission from his parents, Svaminathan rehearsed his part for only two days, and acquitted himself remarkably well as Prince Arthur in the dialogue, winning the appreciation of the entire audience: the acting was so perfect and the enunciation of Shakespeare's classical English so accurate. One of Svaminathan's friends had lent him the attire of a prince and Svaminathan really looked a prince. Many of the teachers went to Subrahmanya Sastri's house next day and expressed how greatly they were pleased with Svaminathan's superb performance.

In 1906 the Sixty-sixth Acharya of Kamakoti Pitha, Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati he was camping in the village Perumukkal near Tindivanam and was observing the *chaturmasya-vrata* there Subrahmanya Sastri went to that village along with his family to have the Acharya's *darsana* and receive his blessings. Svaminathan saw His Holiness from a distance in a temple during the *visvarupa yatra.*

His Holiness the Sixty-sixth Acharya had the Navaratri Celebrations performed at Marakkanam village. After the Navaratri he was camping at Saram village situated on the Tindivanam-Madurantakam rail route. Svaminathan went there with a friend without informing his parents. He offered his homage at the lotus-feet of His Holiness and requested his permission to leave. His Holiness insisted that Svaminathan should stay there itself. Two pandits attached to the Matha also asked Svaminathan to stay there. But Svaminathan said that he had to attend school and that he had not informed his parents about his coming over to the Matha. Thereupon His Holiness gave him permission to leave. Svaminathan left for Tindivanam in a cart belonging to the Matha. After Svaminathan had left, His Holiness informed the two pandits of the Matha his keen desire to install Svaminathan as his successor to the glorious pontifical seat of Kanchi.

His Holiness the Sixty-sixth Acharya attained *siddhi* at Kalavai and Svaminathan's maternal cousin was installed as the Sixty-seventh Acharya. He was the only child of Svaminathan's mother's sister.

When Svaminathan's parents received the news about his installation to the Pitha, Svaminathan's mother desired to see and console her sister whose only child had become an ascetic. The whole family planned to leave for Kalavai in a cart. But at the last minute, Svaminathan's father received a telegram from Tiruchi asking him to attend an Education Conference at Tiruchi. And so, before leaving for Tiruchi, he desired the members of his family not to go to Kalavai. in a cart without proper escort; he asked them to go to Kanchi by train and from there to Kalavai in a cart.

The epic journey to Kanchi and Kalavai and the providential manner in which Svaminathan came to be installed as the Head of the Kamakoti Pitha at a very tender age is recounted by the Acharya himself in the article "*What life has taught me*" already referred to, in the following words:

"We travelled by rail to Kanchipuram and halted at the Sankaracharya Matha there. I had my ablution at the Kumara-koshta-tirtha. A carriage of the Matha had come there from Kalavai with persons to buy articles for the Maha Puja on the 10th day after the passing away of the late Acharya Paramaguru. But one of them, a hereditary *maistry* of the Matha asked me to accompany him. A separate cart was engaged for the rest of the family to follow me.

During our journey, the *maistry* hinted to me that I might not return home and that the rest of my life might have to be spent in the Matha itself! At first I thought that my elder cousin having become the Head of the Matha, it might have

been his wish that I was to live with him. I was then only thirteen years of age and so I wondered as to what use I might be to him in the institution.

But the *mistry* gradually began to clarify as miles rolled on, that the Acharya, my cousin in the purvasrama, had fever which developed into delirium and that was why I was being separated from the family to be quickly taken to Kalavai. He told me that he was commissioned to go to Tindivanam itself and fetch me, but he was able to meet me at Kanchipuram itself. I was stunned with this unexpected turn of events. I lay in a kneeling posture in the cart itself, shocked as I was, repeating RAMA RAMA, the only spiritual prayer I knew, during the rest of my journey.

My mother and the other children came some time later only to find that instead of her mission of consoling her sister, she herself was placed in the state of having to be consoled by someone else!"

Permission for installing Svaminathan in the great pontifical seat of Kanchi was obtained from his father through telegram and every arrangement was made as quickly as possible for his installation. Svaminathan ascended the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha on the 13th of February, 1907, as the Sixty-eighth Acharya, assuming the *sannyaśa* name Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati. His Holiness went in a procession to the *siddhisthala* and performed the Maha-Puja of the Sixty-sixth Acharya.

From Kalavai the new Acharya proceeded to Kumbhakonam where the headquarters of the Matha were located. The transfer of the headquarters from Kanchi to Kumbhakonam had been necessitated by the unsettled political conditions in Tondaimandalam in the eighteenth century during the time of the Sixty-second Acharya.

The Acharya made a brief halt at Tindivanam. One could well imagine what a proud day it should have been for the people of Tindivanam when they received their own Svaminathan as the new Acharya of Kamakoti Pitha. The town wore a festive appearance. The teachers of the American Mission School and the former school-fellows vied with one another in meeting the Acharya and conversing with him. The Acharya had a good word for every one, and spoke tenderly to each one of the teachers.

The head of an Acharya-Pitha is looked upon by the disciples as the spiritual ruler, and is invested with all the regalia associated with a king. The disciples of the Matha desired to celebrate the installation of the new Acharya as the head of the Kamakoti Pitha with due ceremony. The installation was performed on a grand scale on Thursday, the 9th of May, 1907, at the Kumbhakonam Matha. That night seated in the golden *Ambari* on the regal elephant, sent by the Tanjore ruling family, His Holiness went in a grand procession through the main streets of Kumbhakonam. Thus commenced the Acharya's spiritual rulership as the *Jagadguru.*

Tours of victory (*Vijaya-yatra*), in the present context, mean the journeys undertaken by the Acharya to the different parts of the country to bless the people by his presence, to give them opportunities for participation in the daily *puja* performed to Sri Chandramaulisvara and Tripurasundari (Paramesvara and Parvati), the presiding deities of the Matha, and to impart to them the light of spiritual knowledge and the guidelines for conduct. Wherever the Acharya goes, the people of that place take the fullest advantage of his presence, celebrate the event as a great festival, listen to his soul-moving discourses in pin-drop silence, and find in the very atmosphere a sense of exaltation.

The first tour undertaken by the new Acharya was to Jambukesvaram (Tiruvanaikka) in 1908. It was here that Adi Sankara had adorned the Image of the Goddess (Akhilandesvari with ear-ornaments (*Tatanka*). In 1908 arrangements were made for the *kumbhabhishekam* of the temple there, after it had been renovated. Our Acharya was invited by the temple Sthanikas and the authorities to grace the occasion with his presence. The *kumbhabhishekam* was performed with all solemnity and grandeur.

1909 was the *mahamakha* year at Kumbhakonam—an event which occurs every twelfth year. The Matha did its part in playing host to the pilgrims. On the day of the festival, it was a feast for the eyes

to see the Acharya go for the ceremonial *bath* in the *mahamakha* tank. In a grand procession he went seated in an *ambari* on the back of an elephant.

Our Acharya was only fifteen years old in 1909. For two years, the learned *panditas* of the Matha imparted to him instruction in Samskrit classics at Kumbhakonam itself. The management of the Matha felt that a less congested place than Kumbhakonam—a place which would not be frequented by visiting crowds—would be more suitable for study. Mahendramangalam, a quiet village on the northern bank of the Akhanda Kaveri, was selected for the purpose: a *parnasala* was put up near the edge of the river. From 1911 to 1914, the Acharya stayed there studying and receiving the requisite training. It was a strange relation between the teachers and the taught. The teachers were the disciples of the Matha. The Acharya showed the utmost consideration for and respect to the teachers who were entrusted with his training; they too were conscious of the unique honour that was theirs.

Whenever experts in and exponents of musicology met him, he sought to improve his knowledge of this science and art through conversations with them. He used to snatch time to visit the nearby islands in the Kaveri to marvel at the natural scenery. Photographers sometimes took photographs of the natural surroundings. The Acharya evinced interest in the photographic art. Some of the other areas of study of which he gained intimate knowledge are mathematics and astronomy.

In 1914 the Acharya returned to the Matha at Kumbhakonam. He was twenty then. He had acquired by then encyclopaedic knowledge. Whenever scholars went to him, he used to put searching questions relating to their respective fields of study, and thereby gain a lot of information. When he was studying in Kumbhakonam, he made it a point to pay an annual visit to Gangaikonda-chola-puram, and study the inscriptions to be found there and the niceties of temple-architecture. Thus, in a variety of ways the Acharya equipped himself with the all-round knowledge and ability required for fulfilling the obligations of the leadership of the Kamakoti Pitha.

A new journal 'Arya-dharma' commenced its publication under the auspices of the Matha. In October 1916, the Navaratri festival was observed at the Matha with a new fervour. The poet Subrahmanya Bharati wrote in one of his essays praising, in the highest of terms, the manner in which the festival was conducted in the Matha. This is the annual festival at which worship is offered to the world Mother in her triple manifestations—as Durga, Lakshmi, and Sarasvati. Women are honoured with offerings of gifts, as they are manifestations of Para Sakti (the Great Mother of the World). And, ceremonial puja is performed to girls, commencing with a two-year old on the first day and ending with a ten-year old on the last day. This is what is known as *kanya-puja* Along with recitation of the *vedas*, *parayanam* of the *devi-bhagavata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Gita* and other texts, the Chandi and Sri Vidya homas are performed during the festival.

Some of the very first measures taken by the Acharya for the promotion of classical learning and of social welfare yielded rich results and marked only the beginning of many more to come. Distinguished scholars were honoured by the award of titles such as 'sastraratnakara'. Essay-competitions were held for college students on subjects relating to our *dharma* Free studentships were instituted for the benefit of deserving students in schools and colleges. A free Ayurvedic dispensary was started in the Matha. During the Acharya's stay in Kumbhakonam from 1914 to 1918, almost every evening there were learned assemblies or music concerts.

Even professors, scientists, engineers, and administrators went to him for guidance and encouragement. The followers of the other faiths found in the Acharya a deep understanding of their respective doctrines and profound appreciation of every type and grade of spiritual endeavour. Everyone who came into contact with the Acharya recognized in him the *Jagadguru.*

The Acharya's great tour of our sacred land commenced in March 1919. It was a long and strenuous tour; but it was supremerely worthwhile because of the opportunities it gave to people all over the country to meet the Acharya and receive his

blessings. The Acharya never uses any of the modern modes of transport. He mostly walks, and accepts the use of a palanquin only when it is absolutely necessary. An *entourage* accompanies him, consisting of the officials of the Matha *panditas*, *vaidikas*, servants, and animals such as cows, elephants, etc. Wherever the Acharya camps, lots of devotees gather and stay at the camp as long as they can in order to derive the utmost advantage from the Holy Presence. Besides the daily *anushthana* and *puja*, meeting the devotees, receiving visitors, giving instructions to the people concerned for the conduct of the affairs of the Matha and of the many religious and welfare organizations occupy the Acharya's time each day. He hardly gets two or three hours of rest out of twenty-four. With frugal diet taken in between fasting days, and with so much of pressing work day after day, it is a marvel how the Acharya meets the demands on his time and attention with absolute serenity and with perfect poise. No one will fail to note that the ideal of the *sthita-prajna* (the sage who has gained steady wisdom) has become actual in the soul-elevating person of the Acharya.

The long pilgrimage began, in March 1919. During the first three years, the Acharya visited all the places of pilgrimage —even remote and out of the way villages —in the Tanjavur District, the District in which Kumbhakonam is situated. The *chaturmasya* in 1919 was in Veppatur village at a distance of five miles to the east of Kumbhakonam. During the *chaturmasya* the *sannyasins* are to stay at one place so that no harm may be caused to insects and other creatures by treading on them when they come out of the ground in the rainy season. The *sannyasins* camp at one place for four fortnights *pakshas* the observance starts on the full-moon day in the month of *Ashada* which is dedicated to the worship of the sage Vyasa.

During this tour of the Tanjavur District, the Acharya was one day going from one village to another, when he saw about two hundred Harijans waiting for his *darsana*, after having bathed, putting on clean clothes and wearing *vibhuti* on their foreheads. The Acharya spent sometime with them, made kind enquiries about their welfare, and gave them new clothes. Similar events have occurred very often during the Acharya's journeys. His concern for the poor is great and unlimited, and he never fails to exhort the better-placed sections of society to go to their succour, and asks the Matha to set an example in this direction.

The Acharya visited Ramesvaram and collected a small quantity of sand for consigning it later on in the waters of the Ganga, which act is symbolic of the spiritual unity of India.

The Acharya then went to Jambukesvaram. In those early times according to legend the Image of Akhilandesvari was manifesting the Goddess's fierce aspect. Sankara changed this state of affairs and enabled the beneficent aspect to express itself by adorning the image with a pair of ear-ornaments (*Tatankas*) made in the shape of *Sri-chakra*. When the ornaments fall into disrepair periodically, they are set right and refixed. This task is the sacred responsibility of the Kamakoti Pitha; and it is the Head of the Pitha that has the ornaments re-fixed. In 1846, the then Acharya of the Pitha had this ceremony performed. Now, again, in 1923, arrangements were made for the refixing of the *tatankas*. Our Acharya went to Jambukesvaram for participation in this function. It was a great occasion for devotees to gather and pay their homage. Every detail of the ceremony was attended to with meticulous care. Opportunity was availed of for declaring open the renovated Matha of the Kamakoti Pitha there. A Veda-pathasala and centre for scriptural learning started functioning at the Matha.

During the Acharya's Chettinadu visit, a great *Siva-bhakta*, Vainagaram Ramanathan Chettiyar similarly enjoyed attending the *puja* and meeting the Acharya. The people of Chettinadu organised a grand procession at Kadiyapalti. During the procession the Acharya looked out for Ramanathan Chettiar, but he could not be seen. At the conclusion of the procession, the Acharya enquired as to where Chettiyar was. Chettiyar who was standing at a distance in the crowd responded. Asked as to why he was

not to be found in the procession, he replied with great elation that he had the privilege that night of being one of the Acharya's palanquin-bearers.

Many politicians and nationalist leaders met the Acharya during this period. Of these were Sri C. R. Das, along with Sri S. Satyamurti and Sri A. Rangaswami Aiyangar, and Sri Jamnalal Bajaj along with Sri C. Rajagopalachari, and others, The latter group met the Acharya in 1926 at Jambukesvaram. Sri C. Rajagopalachari was staying out, sending in Sri Jamnalal Bajaj. The Acharya sent for C. Rajagopalachari and asked him why he had not come in. When the latter replied that the reason was that he had not bathed that day, the Acharya told him that those who were engaged in national work might not find the necessary time for daily bath, etc., and that Sri C. Rajagopalachari who had dedicated his life for the service of the nation could meet him at any time, and in any condition. The Acharya made it clear to the politicians and political leaders that he, as a *Sannyasin* would not identify himself with party politics of any brand; but he was free to ask them all to keep the good of the people always at heart and to work towards its achievement, and also to do all they could to strengthen faith in God.

An incident which occurred in 1926 deserves special mention. The Acharya was proceeding to Pattukottai from Karambakkudi. Among the people who saw the Acharya off at the latter place there were some Muslims also. One of the Muslims followed the party, touching the palanquin with his hands as a mark of respect. After about three miles of the journey, the Acharya stopped, and called for the Muslim gentleman and made kind enquiries. The Muslim placed before the Acharya some personal matters for his advice and guidance, and then offered some verses of praise he had composed along with flowers and fruit. At the command of the Acharya, the Muslim read out those verses and explained their meaning also. When taking leave he expressed his joy in these words: "To my eyes the Acharya appears as the embodiment of Allah Himself. The Acharya's *darsana* is enough for a man who wants to get liberation from worldly bondage."

At Pondicherry, the officials of the French Government and the people gave the Acharya a royal welcome. In March the Acharya went to Salem and toured in the district.

After visiting Coimbatore in April 1927, the Acharya, arrived in Palghat in the first week of May. Kerala which had given birth to Adi Sankara was now jubilant at the visit of an illustrious successor in whose life and mission the greatness of the Adi-Guru was luminously reflected. The Acharya spoke to the sishyas in Malayalam. The people who listened to him mistook him for a Keraliya.

In the latter half of 1927, Mahatma Gandhi was touring the South. He had heard about the Sage of Kamakoti Pitha, and wanted very much to meet him. The meeting took place at Nallicheri in Palghat. They met in a cattle-shed in the Acharya's camp. It was a unique experience for the Mahatma. Here was an authentic successor of Adi Sankara, dressed in a piece of ochre cloth made of Khadi, and seated on the floor. The Acharya too appreciated the occasion provided for getting to know at first hand the leader of the nation who had adopted voluntarily the mode of a simple peasant's life. The Acharya conversed in Samskrit, and the Mahatma in Hindi. The conversation took place in a most cordial atmosphere. On taking leave of the Acharya, the Mahatma gave expression to the immense benefit he had derived from this unique meeting. How profoundly he was drawn to the Acharya will be evident from a small incident that occurred during the interview. It was 5-30 in the evening. Sri C. Rajagopalachari went inside the cattle-shed and reminded the Mahatma about his evening meal; for the Mahatma would not take any food after 6 o'clock. The Mahatma made this significant observation to Sri C. Rajagopalachari: "The conversation I am having now with the Acharya is itself my evening meal for to-day".

In February 1929, the Acharya began his tour of the South Arcot District. The *Chaturmasya* that year was observed in Manalurpettai. For about a month the Acharya was having fever. In utter neg-

lect of the state of his body, he performed the daily worship, taking his usual bath. In due course the fever left, relieving the devotees of their great anxiety.

During the present tour, the Acharya was passing through Tandalam village. A cowherd of that place wanted to sell his small holding and give the proceeds as his offering to the Acharya. The Acharya dissuaded him from doing so; but the devotee would not go back on his resolve. He actually sold his piece of land to a rich man of the place and made his heart-offering to the Acharya. The Acharya, however, did not like that the cowherd should become a destitute. He, therefore, arranged through the local Tahsildar for the allotment of sufficient piece of *Puramboke* land to the cowherd.

In December 1930, at Tirukkalukkunram (Pakshitirtham), an address of welcome was presented to the Acharya on behalf of the All-India Sadhu Mahasangham. The address referred in glowing terms to the invaluable service that the Acharya was doing to Hindu *dharma* and society, both through precept and practice, following faithfully the grand tradition of Adi Sankara.

From Chingleput, the Acharya went to Kanchi, the seat of the Kamakoti Pitha. This was his first visit after he had assumed the headship of the Pitha. The ceremonial entry into the holy city was made on Sunday the 25th of January, 1931. The city wore a festive appearance that day. The citizens offered to the Acharya a reverential and enthusiastic welcome.

The *chaturmasya* in 1931 was in Chittoor. After that the tour was resumed. While the Acharya was camping in Arani, a party of about two hundred volunteers of the Indian National Congress wanted to have his *darsana*. Those were the peak days of the struggle for freedom. The British Government would come down upon anyone who showed any hospitality to the volunteers. Therefore, the officials of the Matha were hesitant in the matter of receiving the volunteers. When the Acharya was informed of the intention of the volunteers, he immediately asked the officials to admit them and arrange for their hospitality. He made individual enquiries of the members of the party and gave to each one of them *vibhuti-prasada*.

In March 1932, the Acharya went to Kalahasti for the *mahasiva-ratri*. During his stay there, he walked round the Kailasa hill, a distance of about thirty miles along difficult forest paths. From Kalahasti, the Acharya proceeded to Tirupati and Tirumalai; vast concourses of people listened to his daily discourses in chaste Telugu.

In Nagari, the Acharya was presiding over a discussion on Vedanta among scholars, one day. The Manager of the Matha received a telegram from Kumbhakonam carrying the sad news of the passing away of the Acharya's mother on the 14th of June 1932. As the Manager was approaching the Acharya with the telegram in his hand, the Acharya enquired if it had come from Kumbhakonam, to which the Manager replied 'Yes'. The Acharya made no further enquiry, but asked the Manager to get back. He remained silent for some time,[1] and then asked the assembled scholars: "What should a *sannyasin* do when he hears of the passing away of his mother?" Guessing what had happened, the scholars were deeply distressed and could not say anything. The Acharya got up and walked to a water-falls at a distance of two miles followed by a great number of people chanting the Lord's name. He took his bath, the others too did the same. The passing away of the Mother of the Jagadguru was felt as a personal loss by every one of the sishyas.

There is a spot of natural beauty near Nagari, called Bugga. In the same temple, here, there are the shrines of Kasi Visvanatha and Prayaga Madhava. A perennial river flows by the temple; and five streams feed the river. Commencing from the 17th of July 1932, the Acharya observed the *chaturmasya* at this fascinating place. During his stay the temple was renovated and Kumbhabhishekam performed on a grand scale.

Before we follow the Acharya to Madras, let us record here the epic of a faithful and

1. The Acharya's father Sri Subrahmanya Sastri passed away in Kumbhakonam on the 24th of July, 1929. When the news was conveyed to the Acharya he remained silent for some time and said nothing.

devoted dog. Since 1927, a dog was following the retinue of the Matha. It was a strange dog—an intelligent animal without the least trace of uncleanliness. It would keep watch over the camp during the nights. It would eat only the food given to it from the Matha. The Acharya would therefore enquire every evening if the dog had been fed. When the camp moved from one place to another, the dog would follow, walking underneath the palanquin, and when the *entourage* stopped so that the devotees of the wayside villages could pay their homage, it would run to a distance and watch devoutly from there, only to rejoin the retinue when it was on the move again. One day, a small boy hit the dog; and the dog was about to retaliate, when the officials of the Matha, in fear, caused the dog to be taken to a distance of twenty-five miles blindfolded and left there in a village. But strange as it may seem, the dog returned to where the Acharya was even before the person who had taken it away could return. From that day onwards the dog would not eat without the Acharya's *darsana* and stayed till the end of its life with the Matha.

The citizens of Madras had the great privilege of receiving the Acharya on the 28th of September, 1932. During the four months' stay of the Acharya in the city, the people felt in their life a visible change for the better. In their crowds they flocked to the camp at the Madras Samskrit College and later in the different parts of the city, and drank deep of the elevating presence and the soul-moving speeches of the Acharya.

The *navaratri* in 1932 was celebrated at the Samskrit College. During this *puja* festival, the Acharya fasts and observes silence on all the nine days. Thousands of people participated in the *navaratri* festival at the Samskrit College and received the Acharya's benedictions.

After the *navaratri* the Acharya delivered discourses every evening after the *Puja*. Thousands of people listend to these in pin-drop silence seated in the *simhasana*, the Acharya would remain silent for some time. Then, slowly he would commence to speak. It was not mere speech; it was a message from the heart, each day. With homely examples, in an engaging manner, he would exhort the audience to lead a clean, simple unselfish and godly life. The essentials of Hindu *dharma*, the obligatory duties, the supreme duty of being devoted to God, the harmony of the Hindu cults, the significance of the Hndu festivals and institutions, the cultivation of virtues, and the gandeur of Advaita, formed some of the themes of these discourses.

For a long time the Acharya had had the intention of visiting Chidambaram. But, for over two hundred years no previous Acharya had gone there, the reason being that the Dikshitars of the Temple of Sri Nataraja would not let even the Acharyas of the Sankara Matha take the sacred ashes straight from the cup as was the custom in all other temples as a mark of respect shown to the Pitha. Many of the devotees of Chidambaram, however, wished very much that the Acharya should visit Chidambaram; and the Acharya too wanted to have Sri Nataraja's *darsana.* Accepting the invitation of the devotees, he arrived at Chidambaram on May 18, 1933. A great reception was accorded to him by the inhabitants of Chidambaram, including the Dikshitars. The devotees of the Acharya were rather apprehensive of what might happen when the Acharya visited the temple in regard to the offering of *Vibhuti.* The Acharya, however, was utterly unconcerned. All that he wanted was to have Sri Nataraja's *darsana* as early as possible. He resolved to go to the temple early in the morning; having asked one of his personal attendants to await for him at the tank, he went there alone at 4 a.m., had his bath and *anusthana* and when the shrine was opened he entered and stood in the presence of Sri Nataraja absorbed in contemplation. The Dikshitar who was offering the morning worship was taken aback when he saw the Acharya there. He sent word to the other Dikshitars; and all of them came at once. They submitted to the Acharya that they were planning for a ceremonial reception, and that they were pained at the fact that none of them were present in the temple to receive him that morning. The Acharya consoled them saying that he had gone to the temple to have the early morning *darsana* of Sri Nataraja. known as the *visvarupa-darsana,* and that be would be

visiting the temple several times during his sojourn in Chidambaram. The Dikshitars honoured the Acharya in the same manner as he is honoured in the other temples. And, at the earnest request of the Dikshitars, the Acharya stayed in the temple for a few days and performed the Sri Chandramaulisvara-puja in the thousand-pillared Mantapa. The devotees had the unique experience of witnessing *puja* performed, at the same place, to two of the five *sphatika-lingas* brought by Sankara, according to tradition, from Kailasa—the *moksha-linga* of Chidambaram and the *yoga-linga* of Sri Kamakoti Pitha.

The preparation for the Acharya's northward journey to Kasi had by now completed. Aged *sannyasins* like Brahmananda Sarsavati and revered scholars including Mahamahopadhyaya Ananda Saran and Pratap Sitaram Sastri, Agent of the Sringeri Matha, sent their letter of invitation to the Acharya of the Kamakoti Pitha on behalf of the citizens of Varanasi.

A representative Committee had been formed at Varanasi headed by His Highness the Maharaja of Kasi, with Pandit Madanmohan Malaviya, the Mahamahopadhyayas, distinguished scholars, and other eminent men as members. The citizens of the Spiritual Capital of our country were eagerly looking forward to the visit of our Acharya, who had already made the *sankalpa* for *Kasi-yatra.*

In conformity with the past practice observed by the previous Government, the Government of Madras issued a notification to the Governments of other States, and the native States to accord due honour and all facilities to the Acharya and his entourage during his journey to *Kasi.*

The journey commenced in the second week of September, 1933. The Acharya proceeded northwards, covering about twenty miles each day. While camping at Kurnool, the Acharya thought of going to Srisaila which is regarded as the Southern Kailasa.

Taking with him only a few attendants, the Acharya went by boat upto Peddacheruvu, and from there walked the remaining distance of eleven miles uphill. He reached Srisaila on the 29th of January, 1934, went to the temple, and stood before the deities for a long time reciting verses from the *Sivananda-lahari* and the *Saundarya-lahari.* After spending a few days at Srisaila, the Acharya returned to Kurnool. During the difficult Srisaila journey through dense forests, the Chenchus, members of a wild hill-tribe, gave every assistance and protection to the visiting party. They considered the Acharya's presence in their midst a great blessing.

Crossing the Tungabhadra at Kurnool, the Acharya entered the Hyderabad State. He reached the Capital of the State on the 12th of February, 1934. The people and the State officials including the Chief Minister vied with one another in paying their homage to the *Jagadguru.* At the command of the Nizam, the State Government undertook to meet one day's expenses of the Matha.

As the journey from Hyderabad northwards would be a difficult one—through wild forests and uninhabited areas—a large part of the entourage consisting of carts, cattle, attendants and others, was left behind; this part rejoined the group that accompanied the Acharya, after four years, in Andhra Pradesa.

After spending a few days at Nagpur in June, the Acharya travelled through the country of the Vindhya mountains. It was an arduous journey in burning summer, through practically waterless tracts. The members of the party braved all difficulties with cheer, their sole aim being to serve the Master in the fulfilment of the resolve to complete the pilgrimage to Kasi. After crossing the Vindhyas, the Acharya reached Jabalpur on the 3rd of July 1934, and had his bath in the sacred river Narmada. Journeying quickly thereafter, the Acharya arrived at Prayaga (Allahabad) on the 23rd of July 1934. At the outskirts of the holy city, the prominent leaders of the place headed by Mahamahopadhyaya Ganganatha Jha received the Acharya with due ceremony. Thousands of people lined the route of the procession, uttering the words "Victory to the great Guru!" *Gurumaharaj-ji-ki Jai*).

On the 25th of July 1934, the Acharya immersed the sacred sand he had brought from Ramesvaram in the holy waters at Pra-

yaga, the place of *Triveni-Sangama*, the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the subterranean Sarasvati; and gathering the holy water in vessels, he had it sent to the places of pilgrimage in South India. By these significant ceremonial acts, the Acharya made it known to our people how custom and tradition are expressive of the spiritual, as well as geographical, unity of India. On the 26th of July, the Acharya commenced the *Chaturmasya* at Prayaga. During this *Chaturmasya* period, a conference of scholars was held in the immediate presence of the Acharya. Several *Panditas* of North India participated in the deliberations of Conference, received the Acharya's blessings.

From Prayaga (Allahabad) to Kasi—a distance of eighty miles—the Acharya travelled by foot. He entered the most holy city of Kasi on the 6th of October 1934, and was received by the citizens in their thousands, headed by the Maharaja of Kasi, Pandit Madanmohan Malaviya, and others. About a lakh of people participated in the procession that day, many of them uttering the full throated cries of victory, "*Jagadguru-Maharaj-ji-ki Jai!*". Unprecedented crowds —a record in the history of the city—gathered to greet the visiting Acharya.

It was in this Kasi near the Manikarnika Ghatta that Adi Sankara wrote his commentaries. It was Kasi that proclaimed him as the Jagad-guru. It was from there that he started on his *dig-vijaya*. And so our Acharya's visit to Kasi was full of supreme significance.

On the 9th of February, 1935, in response to Pandit Madanmohan Malaviya's request the Acharya paid a visit to the Hindu University. In his welcome address consisting of five verses in Samskrit, Pandit Malaviya referred to the fact that the Acharya was adorning the Kanchi Pitha established by Sri Sankara and that his name and grace born of his great wisdom, austerity, compassion, generosity, etc., had spread far and wide in his sacred land. The Acharya pointed out that the end of education is to gain peace of mind, and that it is by acquiring wisdom that one realizes immortality. The Acharya said that the main objective of *Astika* education should always be kept in view in planning the details regarding the courses of study, etc., and expressed the wish that the University should train and send out leaders of thought and action who would set an example in ideal living for the masses of the people to follow. In his concluding speech, Pandit Malaviya said that while from the legends regarding Adi Sankara they knew that the great Master visited Kasi and saved the world through his wondrous works, they now had the rare experience of seeing with their own eyes in Kasi the Acharya who was an *avatara* of Adi Sankara.

A conference of the Panditas of Bengal led by the grand old Mahamahopadhyaya Kamalanayan Tarkaratna was held at Calcutta. Over one hundred and thirty scholars met. The conference sent as its representative Sri Mahamahopadhyaya Durgasaran to Varanasi to invite His Holiness to visit Calcutta and to convey its considered view acclaiming the high status and the greatness of the Kamakoti Pitha at Kanchi.

Leaving Kasi on the 18th of March 1935, the Acharya reached Patna (Pataliputra) on the 24th of April. The next important place of visit was Gaya.

After brief halts *en route*, the Acharya reached Calcutta on the 13th of July, 1935. The premier city accorded to him a rousing welcome. The Acharya observed the *chaturmasya* from the 17th of July at Kali Ghat.

Navaratri or *Dasara* (called *puja* in Bengal) is the most important festival for the Bengalis. The Acharya performed the *navaratri puja* in September-October at Calcutta, delighting the hearts of thousands of devotees there. In the third week of October, the All-India tour was resumed. A steamer took the Acharya and the entourage on the rivers, Damodar and Rupnarayan which are tributaries to Adiganga. The Acharya reached Midnapore in response to the earnest request of the people of that place on the 27th of October, 1935. Midnapore at the time was the spearhead of the revolutionary nationalist movement. Many young men—especially college students—were behind prison-bars as detenus. And, the town was under curfew restrictions. The authorities, however, relaxed some of the restrictions to enable the people to receive the Acharya

and participate in the religious functions connected with the unique visit. Coming to know of the Acharya's presence in Midnapore, many of the detenus desired to meet him. They obtained permission from the British officer in charge of the prison for this purpose; but the condition imposed was that they should return to the prison before 6 p.m. that day. When the detenus reached the Acharya's camp late in the evening, the Acharya had just then retired for brief rest after the day's *puja*. After waiting for some time, the young men started going back to the prison, disappointed. Meanwhile, the Acharya came out and on learning about what had happened, sent for the detenus. They came again, prostrated before the Acharya, and prayed to him for his blessings for the gaining of independence for the country and for the welfare and happiness of the people.

Entering the Cuttack District of Orissa at Jaipur on 4th April, 1936. After visiting Sakshi-Gopal, the Acharya proceeded to Puri Jagannath. At the end of a grand procession, a ceremonial reception was given to him at the Govardhana Matha. The other Advaita Mathas of Puri, *viz.*, Sankarananda Matha, Sivatirtha Matha, and Gopalatirtha Matha, also associated themselves with this function, and co-operated in the arrangements connected with the Acharya's visit. The Acharya visited the temple of Jagannatha, and at the request of the scholars of the Mukti-mantapa Sabha, sat on the Pitha in the Mantapa and blessed the assembly. In a speech delivered in Samskrit, the Acharya said that he regarded the honour shown to him as belonging to Adi Sankara whose holy Feet are worshipped by all, and who made the false doctrines disappear from the land by establishing the supreme Truth.

The journey through the Chilka Lake area was an arduous one. High mountains, thick forests and sandy wastes had to be crossed. Walking at the rate of twenty-five miles a day, the Acharya with the tour-party arrived at Chatrapur on the 17th of May 1936; at this place which is on the sea-coast at the southern end of the Lake, there is a temple of Adi Sankara. The *chaturmasya* which commenced on the 4th of July was observed at Berhampur.

Simhachalam is an ancient pilgrim centre in Andhra. On a picturesque hill is situated the ancient temple of Sri Varaha Nrisimha. On the 4th of November 1936, the Acharya visited this shrine, and spent some time in meditation near the *gangadhara falls.* Three days later, the Acharya reached Vishakapatnam, the harbour-town.

The Andhra districts to receive the Acharya next in sequence were Krishna, Guntur, and Nellore. After visting Venkatagiri, he went to Kalahasti and Tirupati again. In April, 1939, Sri Sankara-Jayanti was celebrated at Bugga. After havnig Sri Subrahmanya's *darsana* on the Tiruttani hill, the Acharya reached Kanchi on the 2nd of May, 1939.

From Kanchi, the Acharya proceeded to Chidambaram *en route* to Ramesvaram. The sand collected at Ramesvaram in September 1922, it will be recalled, was immersed in the holy waters at Triveni-Sangama (Allahabad) on the 25th of July 1934. The sacred water of the Ganga that was gathered there was now to be offered to Sri Ramanatha as *abisheka*. On the 10th of June, 1939, after bathing in the Agni-tirtha the Acharya went to the temple, and the *abisheka* was performed. With this was concluded the Acharya's Ganga-yatra.

From the next day onwards, for over six months, the Acharya observed silence. But the tour-schedule was continued, as also all the activities connected with the Matha. The Acharya returned to Kumbakonam, from where he had started out on his *vijaya-yatra* twenty-one years earlier. The 29th of June, 1939 was a red-letter day for the citizens of the town; there was no end to their joy in receiving the Acharya again into their midst.

The twenty-one years' All-India tour had paved the way for taking concrete steps towards the consolidation and furtherance of our ancient *dharma*. In the years that have followed, the Acharya has given the lead in several directions for bringing together the different sections of Hindus, for the promotion of Vedic and Vedantic studies, for the due observance of religious ceremonies, and rules of conduct as prescribed in the Sastras, for deepening the

spiritual life of the people, for rendering service to the sick and the disabled, and for universal welfare.

In 1939, the Acharya had an organization of *mudradhikaris* set up with a view to serve the people in a comprehensive way. The *mudradhikaris* are representatives of the Matha in the different places. Among their functions are: to enlist the co-operation of the people in keeping the temples in good repair, see to it that temple-worship is performed in the proper order, to arrange for popular expositions of the *Puranas* on Ekadasi days, to bring together all classes of people in such corporate activities as digging tanks and wells, dragging the temple-car on festival days, etc., and cattle-care. In order to implement this programme and ensure the best possible results, the Acharya toured the villages in the Tanjavur District, and other places several times, and convened periodical conference of the *mudradhikaris* to instruct them personally.

Under the guidance of the Acharya, several of the old temples came to be renovated, and *kumbhabhishekams* were performed.

In order that the evils caused by the Second World War may not oppress the people and distort their minds, the Acharya suggested to the temple-authorities, and managements of religious charities, in 1942, that the *Sri-rudra* and *Sri-vishnu-sahasranama* be recited and *archanas* performed in the temples. Accordingly, in many temples, this suggestion was carried out.

The Vedas constitute the basic scriptures of the Hindus. It is through the preservation of the Vedas that Hindu culture has been preserved in spite of the vicissitudes of history. In recent times, the cultivation of skill in Vedic recitation and Vedic studies have been neglected because of alien influence and conditions of modern life. In order to offset the forces making for deterioration, the Acharya caused to be organized the Veda-dharma-paripalana-sabha. Under the auspices of this sabha, which was started in 1944, annual conferences of Vedic scholars are held in the various parts of the country, examinations are conducted in Vedic literature and prizes are awarded to successful candidates, maintenance is provided for selected Vedic scholars, institutions for teaching the Vedas are set up and run, and every possible assistance is given for the preservation of Vedic culture. In January 1955 at Kanchi where the Acharya was staying at the time, a conference of eminent Vedic scholars was convened, and seventeen *panditas* in Rig, Yajus and Sama Veda were selected from all over the country and honoured with presents and awards.

The consolidation of Advaita through his *bhashyas* and numerous Vedantic manuals, and through teaching by example and precept, was the greatest gift Adi Sankara conferred on the entire humanity. The central mission of any institution which owes its foundation to the Great Teacher should be to spread the knowledge of Advaita. The Jagadgurus of Sri Kamakoti Pitha have, in various ways, rendered invaluable service to the cause of Advaita. An important measure designed to promote studies in Advaita was taken when the Parama-guru of our present Acharya inaugurated, in 1894, at Kumbhakonam, the Advaita Sabha. The Golden Jubilee of the Sabha was celebrated in February, 1945, at the Kumbhakonam Matha in the presence of our Acharya. The Acharya commended the work of the Sabha, and explained the essentials of Advaita-Vedanta. The basic truth of Advaita is that the Self (Atman) alone is real, and that all else is *mithya*. Not understanding the implication of the words *mithya* and *maya*, the critics find fault with Advaita. Although ultimately the world of plurality is not real, it is not that it is not useful. Because the world of *maya* is useful until the onset of wisdom, it is vested with empirical reality (*vyavaharika satya*). It is in this world, and while living in it, that we have to strive for and gain release from bondage. The true *moksha* is the attainment of all-selfhood, in this very life, by the removal of *maya* through knowledge. The followers of the different religions think that their particular mode of worship alone is the true mode. But we who follow Advaita believe that it is the same God that is attained through any of the religious modes, and that devotion to God is essential for realizing the truth of

Advaita. In conclusion, the Acharya referred to the fact that teachers of Advaita have appeared at all times and in all the different parts of the country, and have left behind immortal works on Advaita; and he declared that it was our duty to study those works and gain the wisdom that is contained in them.

Ten years later, in March, 1956, the Diamond Jubilee of the Advaita Sabha was celebrated at Sivasthanam near Kanchi, where the Acharya was staying at the time. Addressing the conference, the Acharya observed that the aim of the Advaita Sabha was to spread the light of the Self as revealed in the Upanishads, that those who adopted Advaita as their way of life should look upon all beings as they would on themselves and render some service or other every day to the afflicted and the distressed, and that they should investigate the cause of dispute among religious cults and seek to eliminate it.

It is on the basis of Advaita that the conflicts among religious cults could be removed. With sympathy and understanding, it will not be difficult to realize that, it is the same God that is worshipped under different names and forms. The special contribution of Hinduism to the world's history of religions is the truth that there are as many modes of approach to God-head as there are minds. And, yet, on account of misunderstanding and narrowness, the followers of the different cults of Hinduism have indulged in quarrels sometimes. In South India, exclusive claims have been advanced, for instance, on behalf of Vaishnavism and Saivism. While the Alvars and Nayanmars were universalistic in their outlook, their later followers introduced narrow distinctions and dogmatic partisanships. Our Acharya wanted to give a concrete form to the movement for unity and co-ordination as between the Vaishnavas and the Saivas in Tamil Nadu; and accordingly, the idea of Tiruppavai—Tiruvembavai — Shadanga —Conference was hit upon in 1950. Andal's *Tiruppavai* and Manikkavachakar's *Tiruvembavai* are sung in the Vishnu and Siva temples respectively in the month of Margali (Margasirsha). The Acharya had a conference of scholars in these sacred texts organized at Tiruvidaimarudur in December 1950. It was a unique experience to listen to the Vaishnava and Saiva scholars speak from the same platform.

The unity-movement has been gaining in popularity since its inception. Encouragement is given for children to learn to recite the two poems.

Religion is the basis of Hindu culture; spirituality is its back-bone. What are considered elsewhere to be secular arts, such as sculpture and dancing, are here in India regarded as sacred. Hindu culture in all its aspects spread far wide in the past. The evidences of its influence are even now to be found in widely distant countries from Egypt in the West to Java and Bali in the East. Speaking about the pervasiveness of Hindu culture at a meeting at the Kumbhakonam Matha in January 1947, the Acharya dwelt on the need for the resuscitation of the traditional arts and crafts. These should be revived and popularized, bearing in mind that all of them serve the purpose of strengthening faith in God, faith in spiritual values. The temple is the centre of the ancient arts and crafts. Architecture, sculpture, and iconography go into the building of temples and the making of images. The directions for these arts are to be learnt from the Agamas—Saiva, Sakta, Vaikhanasa and Pancharatra. It is from the same sources that the *archakas* have to know the correct procedures of temple-rituals and worship. Popular discourses on the Epics and Puranas used to be given mainly in the temples, and on occasions of temple-festivals. The folk-songs, dances, etc., have for their themes the religious stories as related in the Epics, etc. The Acharya wanted to institute an organization which would work for the revival—leading to a renaissance—of the ancient skills and arts relating to the temples. He had a *sadas* arranged for, for the first time in 1962, during the *chaturmasya* at Ilayattangudi—the Akhila-Vyasa Bharata-Agama-Silpa-Sadas. Scholars and specialists in the various fields covered by the wide scope of the *sadas* are invited to present papers and give expositions at the annual sessions of the conference. Besides the traditional *panditas* in the *agamas* and experts in Silpa, some foreign scholars also take part in the *sadas*. The *archakas* are

asked to discuss and settle points relating to rituals and worship. Arrangements are made for cultural programmes consisting of the folk arts of the different regions. The *sadas* has become now a permanent annual feature.

One of the most significant achievements in the last few years is the bringing together of the Heads of the Dharma-Pithas in South India in periodical conferences with a view to formulate and execute concerted measures for the safeguarding and furtherance of Hindu institutions and practices. This has become possible through the initiative and leadership of our Acharya. The objectives of the conference of the Heads of the Dharma-Pithas are to strengthen the forces that make for *astikya*, to project before the people the true image of Hindu-dharma, to work for the consolidation of the Hindu society, and to persuade its members to follow the path of virtue.

The 'rice-gift' scheme formulated by the Acharya is being implemented in several areas. According to this scheme, in each household, everyday before starting to cook rice, a handful of rice along with a paisa should be put into a pot kept for the purpose. Once a week the rice and coins should be collected by the Association in each street or locality constituted under the scheme. The rice thus gathered should be handed over to the temple in the neighbourhood for being cooked and offered to the deity as *naivedya*. The cooked rice that has been consecrated should be sold in packets to the poor people of the place at a nominal charge of 10 paise per packet. The amounts collected thus and the gift-coins gathered from the charity-pots should be utilised towards meeting the cost of firewood and for paying the temple-cook for his services. This scheme will benefit those who give as well as those who receive. Those who give will have the satisfaction of having made their daily offering to God and their less fortunate brethren; and those who receive will have their hunger satisfied and thoughts purified through partaking of the consecrated food.

One of the most distressing phenomena is the crude way in which Corporation or Municipal servants dispose of the dead bodies of Hindu destitutes. The Acharya has repeatedly exhorted the well-to-do Hindus to do their duty by those who are unfortunate in life and unfortunate in death also. Arranging for the proper cremation or burial of the dead bodies of destitutes is of the greatest importance. This is one of the functions of the Hindu-mata Jivatma-kainkarya Sangha organised at the instance of the Acharya. Among the functions of the Sangha are: weekly visits to hospitals for distributing the Acharya's *prasada* (*vibhuti* and *kunkumum*) to patients and making them think of God who is the Great Healer, offering the *tulasi* leaves. Ganga-water, etc., to those who are on the verge of death, and performing Sri-Ramanama-japa staying by their side; going to the villages one day every week for explaining to the people the essentials of Hindu-dharma; and arranging for frequent talks on ethical living and spiritual disciplines for the benefit of those who are behind prison-bars.

Some of the other activities and institutions which owe their inception to the Acharya, in recent times, are: the institutions of "Weekly Worship" enabling the Hindu community of each place to visit the local temple collectively once a week and perform *bhajana*, the setting up of Amara-bharati-pariksha-samiti for arranging, for instruction in Samskrit for beginners, conducting periodical examinations, and awarding certificates and prizes; the starting of the Madras Samskrit Education Society at Nazarethpet near Madras for the promotion of studies in Samskrit.

One of the major causes for our cultural decline was foreign domination. This cause was removed when our country gained political independence from British rule on the 15th of August, 1947, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. But political emancipation cannot be an end in itself; it must lead on to a new flowering of the Soul of India. In a message issued on the day of Independence, the Acharya said: "At this moment when our Bharata Varsha has gained freedom, all the people of this ancient land should with one mind and heart pray to the Lord. We should pray to Him to vouchsafe to us increasing mental strength and the power for making spiritual progress. It is only by His Grace that we

can preserve the freedom we have gained, and help all beings in the world to attain the ideal of true happinesss.... For a long time our country has striven for freedom; by the Grace of God, by the blessings of sages, and by the unparallelled sacrifices of the people, freedom has come to us. Let us pray to the all-pervading God that He may shower His Grace so that our country will become prosperous, being freed from famine-conditions, and the people will live unitedly and amicably without any communal strife". The Acharya also appealed that the people should cultivate the cardinal virtues, ridding themselves of passions and violent desires, and that they should by inward control and spiritual knowledge seek to realize the Self.

The Acharya arrived at Kanchi on the 22nd of June, 1953, and made a stay of three years there.

The Acharya wanted to select a successor to the Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha, and train him for the great tasks and duties associated with the headship of the Pitha. The choice fell on a young disciple, Subrahmanyam by name, the son of Sri Mahadeva Aiyar who was an official of the Southern Railway at Tiruchi. From his early boyhood, Subrahmanyam had been receiving Vedic education at the Matha itself. He was about nineteen years of age in 1954. The Vedic rituals connected with initiating him into *sannyasa* and imparting to him the *mahavakya-upadesa* by the Acharya took place at Kanchi from the 19th to the 22nd March, 1954. Thousands of people had gathered in the holy city for witnessing the unique ceremony on the 22nd of March. The young disciple stood hip-deep in the Sarvatirtha Tank as soon as the Acharya had arrived there, and discarded the insignia and attire of the *purvasrama*. Then he donned the *kashaya* cloth and repaired to the shrine of Sri Visvesvara where the Acharya imparted to him *mahavakya-upadesa*. He was given the *yoga-pattam*, 'Sri Jayendra Sarasvati.' From that day onwards he has been with the Acharya as the First Disciple, receiving the necessary guidance in the performance of the many duties associated with the Pitha and its ever increasing sphere of spiritual service to the people.

On the 18th of May 1954, the Acharya's *shashti-abda-purti* (sixty-first birth-day) was celebrated all over the country. In a message to the disciples who had gathered at Kanchi that day, the Acharya asked them to do their utmost to preserve the Vedic lore, to spread the spirit of devotion among the people, and to make endowments of lands, etc., for charitable purposes. To mark the auspicious occasion Sri Sankara's *Brahma-sutra-bhashya* with notes was published by the Kamakoti Kosasthanam.

The Golden Jubilee of the Acharya's ascension to the Kamakoti Pitha was celebrated on the 17th of March 1957, at Kalavai where he had ascended the Pitha in 1907. In the course of a message, the Acharya observed:

"We know today that half-a-century has passed. There is not much use in reviewing all that we have been able to do in the past fifty years. On the contrary, we should bestow our thoughts on what we have to in the remaining years that are given to us by God in this life. What is it that has to be done by us? What has to be done is to gain the state of freedom from all action. But, in the *Bhagavad-gita*, the Lord declares repeatedly that the state of freedom from action cannot be obtained by remaining quiet (without performing our duty). It is by performing action that the state of actionlessness can be realized. What is that action which is very intense, by which actionlessness is to be achieved by us? In answering this question, we recollect and remind you of the Bhagavatpada's command: 'Let action be performed well; thus let God be worshipped!' Let us then perform our allotted actions. It is the performance of allotted actions that constitutes service to the Lord, worship of Him, and becomes the means to obtain His Grace. Therefore, performing our respective duties, and thus worshipping the Lord, we shall gain the Supreme God."

In the history of the city of Madras, the years 1957-59 constitute an unforgettable chapter; for, during these years, the Acharya stayed in the city—visiting it after a lapse of twenty-five years—and blessed the people by his benign presence, by the daily *Puja* performed to Sri Chandramaulisvara and Sri

Tripurasundari, and by his after-puja discourses.

Every moment of His Holiness's life is spent in the service of Adi Sankara, in conveying the Great Msater's all-comprehensive and soul-saving message to the people at large. With a view to remind the people of Sri Sankara and his spiritual mission, His Holiness has been causing Sankara Memorial Mantapas to be constructed during the last few years, at important places of pilgrimage. The first to be so constructed is the one at Ramesvaram. After participating in the *Kumbhabhishekam* of Sri Bangaru Kamakshi at Tanjavur on the 7th of April, 1963, the Acharya proceeded to Ramesvaram for the conecration of the first Sankara Memorial Tower there. The consecration ceremony took place significantly on the Sankara Jayanti Day, the 28th of April, 1963.

The entire Memorial is a graceful structure with representations of holy sages and preceptors whose sight would bring back to one's memory the unique grandeur of India's culture. As one rises from the Agnitirtha after a sanctifying bath, one beholds the Memorial Tower and the various features thereof. Each aspect elevates the mind of the onlooker. The central figure of Sri Adi Sankara surrounded by his disciples impresses the pilgrim as representing all that is best and noblest in India's heritage.

In connection with the *Kumbhabhishekam*, a *sadas* was held that night. Addressing the audience, the Acharya explained the significance of the installation of Sri Adi Sankara. With a smile, he observed in a lighter vein : "Sri Adi Sankara was a wandering Acharya moving quickly and frequently from place to place. He had travelled throughout this sacred country. Today Sri Adi Sankara has assumed a fixed seat in Ramesvaram, the *dakshinamnaya-kshetra*, the southern-most *dhama* of all the *dhamas* of Bharatavarsha. To the four corners of India he carried his message; but from today onwards the people of India from all over will be coming to him at Ramesvaram, and after touching his *Paduka* placed in front of the Mantapa, will receive the message and inspiration from him." The Acharya thus gave the reason why Ramesvaram had been chosen as the first place for the installation of Sri Adi Sankara.

Tiruvidaimarudur, also called Madhyarjuna, is a notable place of pilgrimage connected with Adi Sankara's *dig-vijaya*. When Sankara visited this place, he desired that the Mahalinga at the temple should itself declare the truth of Advaita so that the doubt in regard thereto lingering in the minds of some people might be dispelled. In response to the Jagadguru's prayer, the Lord Siva appeared out of the Mahalinga, raised the right hand, and proclaimed the truth of Advaita three times thus: 'satyam advaitam; satyam advaitam; satyam advaitam'. Our Acharya wished that this greatly significant incident should be adequately represented in sculpture so that people would easily remember it. A *vimana* over the entrance of the local Sankara Matha was put up, and within it were installed sculptured figures of the Mahalinga with the right hand raised and of Adi Sankara with palms joined. In the central court yard of the Matha a shrine was constructed and in it was installed Sankara-paduka. Our Acharya accompanied by Sri Jayendra Sarasvati Svami participated in the *Kumbhabhishekam* of this new Memorial, which took place on the 5th of December, 1963. A special feature of the ceremony was the *archana* performed to the *Paduka* with 108 laced shawls, which were subsequently presented to the *panditas*.

In the Sri Matha at Kanchi, a new sixteen-pillared hall was constructed and therein were installed the Images of Adi Sankara and his four disciples, and the Guru-paduka. The Acharya arrived at Kanchi on the 26th of February, 1964, after a tour of the southern districts. On the next day, the 27th of February, the consecration ceremony was performed.

At Kanyakumari, the land's end, where the eternal virgin Mother presides, a Memorial Mantapa for Sankara was built. The *Kumbhabhishekam* for this was performed on the 31st of May, 1964.

Sri-Saila, the Holy mountain, in Andhra Pradesh is one of the most sacred Siva-sthalas. We have already referred to the

visit of our Acharya to this place in 1934 during his *vijaya-yatra* and to the fact that Adi Sankara had also visited it. A fitting Memorial Mantapa for Sankara has been built there. And, our Acharya went to Sri-Saila in March, 1967 for the consecration ceremony.

At Rishikesh near Lakshman Jhula, where the Ganga descends to level-ground, a temple for Sri Sankara has been constructed. This was consecrated on the 14th May 1967, the Sankara Jayanti day.

At Kurukshetra, the Images of Sri Sankara and of the Gitopadesa have been installed. Among the other places of pilgrimage where arrangements are in progress for Sankara-Memorials are Trayambaka where the Godavari has its source, Prayaga where there is the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the invisible Sarasvati and Badari on the Himalayas where Nara and Narayana observe perpetual *tapasya* for the welfare of the world.

During the period of the Acharya's stay in Kanchi in 1953-57, his second visit to the city in 1957-59, and in subsequent years, several foreigners—scholars and savants, spiritual seekers and religious leaders, exponents of the Arts and even diplomats—have had interviews with the Acharya, thereby gaining first-hand knowledge of the immortal tradition of India. What Professor Milton Singer, of the University of Chicago, said after meeting the Acharya in 1955, expresses precisely the feeling of all those from abroad who have had the privilege of conversing with the Great One. This is what the Professor said: "Before I went to India I had heard and read much about the great 'soul-force' of its holy men and saints, but I had assumed that this was something in the ancient past. And it was not until I had met Sankaracharya that I realized it was still a part of the living force of Hinduism to-day".

In his book, *The Lotus and the Robot*, the well-known writer Mr. Arthur Koestler records his impressions of a meeting which he had with the Acharya in 1959, and speaks in glowing terms of the smile that transformed the Acharya's face into that of a child; "I had never seen a comparable smile or expression; it had an extraordinary charm and sweetness".

Miss Eughina Borghini, of Buenos Aires, Argentina, who was among those who attended the first Agama-Silpa-Sadas at Illaiyattangudi in 1962, has this to say about our Acharya:

"I consider the day I first saw His Holiness as a day of great fortune in my life. I consider that in him Jesus has come again into this world. He is an image of love. From the moment I saw him, the light of his grace gave me maturity to understand clearly some of the aspects of spiritual life and religious teachings. His Holiness lives just like Jesus, homeless and devoted to a life of renunciation, and with his contemplation, worship, penance, and teachings is working for the welfare of mankind. I shall bow at his feet and be always adoring him."

Dr. Albert B. Franklin, formerly U.S. Consul-General in Madras, saw the Acharya for the first time in the Madurai Minakshi Temple during the *kumbhabhishekam* in 1963. In these striking words he records what he saw and the deep impression it made on his mind:

"A stir in the central portion of the temple yard before the gilded Vimanam under which the Goddess Meenakshi is henceforth to stay, attracted our attention. The V.I.P's. in that area parted respectfully to let an old man with a beard and a long stick come through. He approached the ladder leading to the top of the Vimanam. It was the Sankaracharya. The old man approached with halting steps, his head turning from side to side as if he wanted not to miss any detail of his surroundings. Who was he? He has a name, he has a dwelling place, he has an age, but in fact, he is Everyman and he is as old as man's ponderings. He is the man of faith who has given away all that he had and follows only his fai h. *He is symbol of that renuciation which is at the heart of all religions, and which Christ himself demanded when asked by the rich young man "What must I do to be saved?"* So, here, at this time, in the temple, he is more than the most highly placed of the V.I.P. guests. With a vigour surprising in so old a man, he seizes the railing of the ladder in a long fingered, bony hand and rapidly climbs seven or eight rungs to a point from which he can reach the top of the Vimanam with

his stick. He remains, a central figure throughout the ceremony".*

Presiding over a meeting held in Madras as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, on the 28th February, 1967, he paid the following tribute to His Holiness.

"The greatest miracle of the human spirit is the sum of knowledge found in the body of lore which we collectively term the Vedanta. His Holiness, sixty years ago, abandoned the multitude of other levels of human existence, contest, involvement, to devote himself to this Truth."

"If we meet here to-day to honour him because of the sixty years of his accession to the title of Holiness, I believe that this is immaterial to him. I believe that he is as far beyond the titles and honours of this world as we, on our side, are in need of honouring him, as a way of symbolising our awareness of the Reality he represents for us."

"It is hard for me to find a tribute in words which expresses my feeling of admiration and gratitude towards His Holiness. Those of us who deal in words as commodity or as a tool of trade, learn to mistrust them. Especially do we mistrust words as a means to describe a living, changing force, or personality, and like your remote ancestors we learn to mistrust words as a means of describing ultimate things."

"It gives me pleasure to be able to say, in these circumstances, that though some of my ancestors were in their day the subject of controversy because of their beliefs, just as Emerson was in his day, yet not one of them would question the appropriateness of my being here this evening. For them as for me, the Spirit whom we are celebrating, represents the highest aspirations of mankind."

It is difficult to reduce to words what one feels about the unique greatness of our Acharya. His very presence in our midst is a blessing. The solace that countless devotees receive from his words is inexpressible. When one thinks of His Holiness, one is reminded of the definition of "The Guru" given by Adi Sankara in his *Prasnottara-ratna-malika*:

ko gurur-adhigatatattvah
sishyahitayodyatah satatam.

"Who is the Guru? He who has realized the Truth, and who is always intent on the disciples' good".

For sixty-three years, His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati has adorned the ancient Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha as the Sixty-eighth Acharya in succession to Adi Sankara. May this spiritual rulership continue to shower its many blessings on the entire world!

* See *The Jagadguru*, edited by Dr. V. Raghavan (Jaya Chandra, Madras-28), p. 101.

THE IDEAL PROPHET OF OUR AGE

By

AGNIHOTRAM RAMANUJA TATACHARIAR

His Holiness Shri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati, the present Pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam is the ideal prophet of our times. The challenge of modern materialism based on experimental science necessitates a unique leadership in religion. In the holy person of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Acharya all our ideals about religion and religious leadership are fulfilled—especially in the context of the present era of science and materialism. A rethinking in the sphere of religion without, at the same time, violating the fundamentals of the hoary tradition is called for. It is a great boon for Hinduism to have in Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Acharya its religious leader *par excellence.*

Hinduism claims to be eternal and rightly so. But its main weakness is the absence of proper leadership and organisation. Hinduism has survived through the ages only on account of the enormous faith of our people and not because of the authority of any church as such. Very often this lack of a sense of institutional authority has shaken the individual's faith and made him an easy convert to other proselytizing faiths.

The distinctive feature of Vedic religion is its impersonal character. According to the Mimamsakas and Vedantins the defects in one's personality are reflected in his thinking. So they decline to accept a religion which is founded by one or many prophets, since there may be some flaws even in a prophet. The logic of the individual's defects compelled our people of yore to think of a pure religion without a person for its founder. But after Buddha and Christ, religion has come to be enormously supported because of the attachment of the masses to the powerful personality of the founder, apart from the principles governing that religion. Naturally, in the efflux of time, the Hindus also began to feel a thirst for a religious leader with individual merits, whom they can follow. The merits by which one is entitled to become a religious leader are the power of his *Achara* and *Anushtana* (maintenance of strict religious purity and faithful adherence to tradition and traditional rites). But the modern man is not captivated by a person of *Achara* and *Anushtana* alone. The modern mind is trained only in the pragmatic field and hence he wants directly to enjoy divinity in the one whom he can call his religious leader.

The background being such, Hinduism stood a very poor chance of survival in the early years of this century. Added to this, the alien proselytizing religions exploited to the full the Hindu theory of a multitude of gods. Religious conversion aggravated the disintegration of the Hindu-fold. It was an up-hill task to consolidate our religion, torn as it was with a number of sub-faiths worshipping different gods, and mutually abusing one another. If the

true prophet had not emerged out in the earlier years of this century and driven home to the people the fundamental unity among the sub-sects of the Hinduism, our religion would have been completely undermined.

By God's grace we had—and continue to have—that Prophet in the personality of Sri Chandrasekarendra Sarasvati. He comprises in himself all that modern world demands of religious leadership. First, he is the head of what comes very near to a seat of authority—the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. Second—his powerful personality compels peoples' devotion and thereby automatically brings them together. Thirdly, though a powerful personality he is most impersonal and he is the finest representative of all that is best in the Hindu tradition. He may rightly be called the Personal-*cum*-Impersonal God. (He has actually been referred to as such by no less a person than the late Pontiff of the Parakala Mutt, Mysore, an equally important Matadhipathi of the *Vaishnava sampradaya* before an assembly of eminent scholars). Fourth, with all his strict adherence to tradition His Holiness is the most catholic-minded and, if one may say so, scientific-minded. Above all he preeminently fulfils the modern man's pragmatic desire to see divinity in flesh and blood.

His Holiness is a rare historical phenomenon.

In his very person, especially in his eyes and in his smile, one finds the unmistakable imprint of divine lustre. A *darsan* of His Holiness is itself sufficient to make one realize a touch of divinity, while a conversation with him almost drags one into the world of the divine. The resplendence of his body, born of Tapas, blinds the unorthodox eye too, purifies the mind from its material entanglements and ultimately confers peace beyond words. He is a repository of both spiritual and temporal knowledge—including knowledge of the modern sciences, while there is no doubt he ultimately represents that Knowledge which is itself Realization.

But it is not his tapas or knowledge that makes him the living God of the masses. He is to them the living God because he loves all people equally—his love transcending all barriers of religion, caste and creed. His aim has always been the welfare of the entire humanity. "Sreyo Bhooyat Sakala Jananam" (Let the whole of humanity attain excellence)—which is the concluding phrase of his benediction to the United Nations as sung by Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi—is not just a grouping of words; it has always been his one and only thought.

For all his exalted divinity, His Holiness is not at all inaccessible. He inspires only love and not awe. He endears himself to one and all by his intensely human attributes. Sometimes it may even appear that he is almost as playful as a child. But if one penetrates through the surface he will find His Holiness to be the Eternally Divine Playchild.

A playful child, and yet the staunchest disciplinarian. We see in him the very image of Sanatana Dharma with all its rules and regulations followed with utmost rigour. With the Kamandalu in one hand and the Danda in the other, his saffron—robed body radiating spiritual power, he walks on this mundane earth as the Presiding Deity of Dharma itself.

He is at once the greatest man of action and also of contemplation. He performs pooja for hours on end with overflowing Bhakti, and the very atmosphere is then surcharged with the purity of his singlemindedness. We see the happiest union of bhakti and jnana in him.

Hinduism has of course produced many great thinkers. But unfortunately most of them have, in a way, only helped to divide Hinduism, each of them stressing the importance of his own school of thought. It is this separatism that has damaged our religion. At the critical juncture when Hinduism stood in the most pitiable state, the advent of Kamakoti Paramacharya alone saved the situation. Right from the beginning of his spiritual reign—even from the time when he was in his teens—he has been stressing the unity among the diversity found in Hinduism. He has propagated not only the unity among the subfaiths of Hinduism but of all religions of the world. His unifying vision ever sees some underlying points of harmony among the various religions and the various sub-

sects of Hinduism. It is only because of him that the great Saiva and Vaishnava sampradayas in South India have come together and have begun to appreciate each other's doctrine. The Tiruppavai—Tiruvambavai movement has caused a revolution by inviting the Vaishnavites and Saivites, although the revolutionary character has been suffused in the sweetness of harmony. It requires the deepest conviction and the greatest perseverance to bring together two sects which have been fighting mutually for centuries. The earnestness, sincerity, conviction and perseverance of this physically frail individual has undid the skirmishes of centuries, almost silently. "Unity in diversity" is the basic point of vedic thinking and it has been given fresh breath only by Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Paramacharya.

Open-hearted as he is, His Holiness appreciates the spiritual truths embedded in any religion. He sees all religions as but facets of the one and only Eternal Religion —Sanatana Dharma.

Another great aspect of our Paramacharya is that he is not at all a visionary. Though he has attained the ideal state, he is a teacher with a practical approach. The schemes he draws for regenerating our religion are very simple and most easy to follow. His thinking is always materialised into successful action because of its utter simplicity. His one mission for the past 63 years has been the maintenance of our religion in its pristine purity. But for him, the words Dharma and Sanatana Dharma would have become extinct. All the divergences in Hinduism are resolved into a homogeneous system by his loving, harmonising touch.

The Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham over which he presides is of course a great institution. But even apart from it, His Holiness himself is an institution. His power is not based on the material affluence of the Peetham. His *tapas* and loving concern for humanity alone have made for his great influence.

I feel myself blessed in that I have been carrying out his commands in my little way for over three decades. His penetrating vision and the earnest consideration for the future of the country dragged me to him. I saw in him the Succour of the forlorn (*Deenabandhu*). Wherever he went, I saw, the lowliest and the last assemble around him and seek his blessings. On many an occasion I have seen him as the very picture of compassion amidst Harijans, making very kind enquiries of their condition with motherly affection. He has arranged for the feeding and clothing of many many Harijans.

His love flows as naturally towards the Harijan as towards the Vedic Pandit. It is said that the principal purpose of an Avatar is to uphold the Vedas. In that sense His Holiness is certainly an Avatar. But for him, Vedic studies would have utterly collapsed. It is he who has created a new interest in Vedic studies by his munificent grants to pupils and teachers who take to the Vedas.

The Mudradhikari system meant for the improvement of social life in the background of our religion has united all the different classes of our people.

If we wish to have a proper assessment of His Holiness's important role in the revival of religion we have to look back to the days of the Freedom Movement.

Being a sannyasin he did not—he could not—enter active politics. But in his heart or hearts he supported National Freedom in the truest sense, for, he wanted not only the foreigners to go, but also the foreign outlook of our people to go. He has been wearing Khaddar right from the days of Gandhi's boycott of mill-cloth. Unfortunately the freedom fighters relegated religion to the background and made politics their sole concern. His Holiness rightly feared that by the time the freedom fighters succeeded in getting political independence for our country, India would have heavily lost her spiritual and religious instincts. He actually warned many political leaders to this effect. But, alas, they did not feel the importance of what he said. So His Holiness himself had to work out schemes incessantly for the upkeep of religion at those critical times when politics alone was all in all. But for his statesmanlike vision at the time of framing our Constitution the very important articles touching religious freedom and the maintenance of religious institutions which are now

happily enshrined in our Great Charter could not have been there. I wish in particular to bring to the notice of enlightened people the silent and steadfast work he did in this direction. For not less than five full years, I know personally, he was immersed in the one thought of getting constitutional authority for religious freedom and the upkeep of religious institutions. I remember vividly that midnight in Melur near Kumbakonam when he solemnly and seriously advised and warned us to take the initiative in protecting religion through the Constitution. We failed to grasp his point. Suddenly he electrified us with the stern mandate that it was high time for us to dedicate ourselves to this great task.

What happened within the next few days revealed his prophetic vision. The Parliamentary Delegation of the British Government came to India to negotiate points touching Indian Freedom and in particular to suggest a New constitution for the Nation. Except for the head of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham all other Peethadhipatis seemed to be in utter darkness about the delegation. His Holiness advised us to meet the delegation and place before them convincingly our suggestions about the present and future status of religion and religious institutions. We wondered whether at all the delegation would give us an interview. Anyhow according to his instruction, we sent a number of telegrams to the delegation, which as we expected were not at all responded to. But somehow His Holiness seemed to be optimistic and his optimism was an enigma to us all. The fools we were! Was he not the author of the Divine Plan?

Quite unexpectedly a telegram called me forth to Madras in connection with a different purpose. When I entered into the Hindu Office in Madras on that quite different errand, the late lamented Kasturi Srinivasan, the then Editor of the *Hindu* sprang a surprise over me by telling that the Parliamentary delegation would be visiting the Hindu Office in the next few minutes. A tea party was arranged in honour of the delegation at the Hindu Office. And so, I stood face to face with those eminent people, who did not even reply to our numerous telegrams. The Secretary of the delegation entered first and Sri Kasturi Srinivasan introduced me to him. I told him that our telegrams were not responded to. He was kind enough to advise me to place our points personally before Mr. Sorenson (M.P.) who was the most important member of the delegation. As matters were so quickly developing I had no time to prepare any written memorandum. I explained by word of mouth to Sorenson the desperate condition of our religion and religious institutions and drew his attention to His Holiness's idea of getting constitutional safeguard for these. Sorenson was kind enough to ask me to meet him once again in Delhi.

I returned to His Holiness to break the news of this wonderful turn of events. After a little meditation His Holiness advised us to prepare a memorandum touching religion as a fundamental right. *Fundamental right*! It was a time when not much was thought about fundamental rights in general, and still less about religious belief as a fundamental right. I may not be wrong if I say this was the birth of Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution itself.

I met Mr. Sorenson at Delhi and submitted our memorandum. He was deeply impressed with, nay, moved by, His Holiness's concern for our people and for his very practical wisdom.

Of course, the Parliamentary Delegation was not a success. But the idea of enshrining religious belief as a Fundamental Right had unmistakably and unassailably struck routes—thanks to the foresight of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Paramacharya. The ball has definitely been set rolling!

Then came the Cabinet Delegation. When we once again moved the Head of the Delegation, Sir Stafford Cripps to our suggestion, he said that ultimately it was only the leaders of India who were going to form the Constitution, and so advised us to meet them.

Even as I recall those days, I am thrilled to think of the divine power of the Yogi then living in a remote village in the far southern part of the Nation. We were

just instruments. It was his power that was revealing itself through us.

It was the peak hour of India's Freedom movement when nothing but politics seemed to be worth attention. Any how we made bold to meet Sardar Patel and spoke to him about religious freedom. He just flared up to say that Hinduism spoke with with different tongues and was not fit for survival. I told him about the efforts of His Holiness to bring to the forefront the underlying unity among what seemed to be different tongues. Sardar Patel was highly impressed and said that he simply could not believe that there could be a Matadhipati in India who did not just think in terms of his own siddhanta but thought of the generality. He said that something could be done towards what we wished, if only we really made efforts to unify the different sects of Hinduism.

Then started our holy pilgrimage throughout India to bring together all the siddhantins and make concerted efforts. With the miraculous Tapo-sakti of His Holiness we were able to meet all the religious heads of India, and for the first time in our history were able to bring them together under one label—"The All India Mutts Conference". This coming together of religious sects gave a new strength to the plea regarding religious belief as a Fundamental Right and getting constitutional safeguard for religious institutions.

India became independent. The Constituent Assembly was set up to frame our Great Charter. In the great excitement of those days none seemed to pay any attention to religion and religious institution as subjects to be covered by the fundamental rights of the Constitution. The Tapasvin of Kanchi was then camping at Ambi village. He called forth eminent Lawyers of Madras to suggest suitable clauses concerning religion and religious institutions for inclusion in the Constitution. These great lawyers prepared lengthy clauses at great pain, but only to be rejected by the adviser of the Constituent Assembly. The adviser suggested a simple clause, but His Holiness's legal knowledge was superior to that of the adviser and so he found out very subtle defects even in that simple clause. His Holiness himself made a very important change in it. The suggestion of His Holiness was welcomed by Constitutional Pandits wholeheartedly and with a sense of wonder at His Holiness's astonishing legal acumer.

Anyhow political leaders were not prepared to give unchecked freedom to religion and religious institution. So this freedom was diluted by the addition of the phrase "in accordance with law". This would mean that the State could thoroughly interfere in religion and religious institutions, because this condition would bind religious institutions with whatever new law a none-too—religious Government may bring forth. At His Holiness's behest a representation was made to members to suitably amend the clause at the stage of the second reading. When we met Dr. Ambedkar in this connection, we did not have any hopes, because we knew of his staunch and stern views. But behold the power of Paramacharya's penance! Dr. Ambedkar told in all earnestness that he was for religion and religious institutions. He declared that religion and religious institutions must certainly be free from the interference of the State. Things went on smoothly and ultimately, clause 26 which deals with religious institutions was split into four parts by the Framers of the Constitution, so that the restrictive phrase "in accordance with law" applies only to the fourth part.

Now in its final form Article 26 of the Constitution reads as follows:

> "......Every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right (A) to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes. (B) to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. (C) to own and acquire moveable and immoveable property and (D) to administer such property in accordance with law."

If such a constitutional guarantee has been got for the independent running of religious institutions it is in no small measure due to the initiative of His Holiness Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Paramacharya. Originally the wording was only "Every religious denomination shall have the right, etc." Nobody found any discre-

pancy in this wording, including the august Constitution-makers. His Holiness alone saw that this was not enough. No Hindu thinks that he is first and foremost a Hindu. He thinks only in terms of his sub-sect, *e.g.*, that he is a Vaishnavaite, a Saivaite, a Smartha or a Saiva Siddhanthin and so on and so forth. Similarly no religious institution in India is running under the label of Hinduism. We only have Vaishnava, Saiva, Smartha, Saiva Siddhantha, etc. etc., Mutts and monastaries. So the word "religious denominations" could not have constitutional application to many of these institutions. Therefore His Holiness felt that the wording should be changed as "every religious denomination *or any section thereof* shall have the right, etc." His supreme will was ultimately carried out!

In all this His Holiness remained behind the screen. But he was the one moving spirit and great political leaders, eminent lawyers, distinguished parlimentarians and experienced jurists just carried out his prophetic schemes for the maintenance of our religious belief and for the constitutional safeguard for our religious institutions. This aspect which has not seen light of the day till now deserves to be written in letters of gold in the history of our religion; perhaps also of our Constitution—making.

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In particular I want to draw the attention of the public to two great incidents, which will, ever remain fresh in my memory.

When we were meeting the Matadhipathis throughout India, myself in company with some others had an unforgettable audience with the then Pontiff of Sri Sringeri Sarada Peetham—Poojya Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati. He was a divine personality. Though head of a Mutt, he was very often immersed in deep meditation and came to external consciousness only on rare occasions. When we called at Sringeri, as though by miracle the great Acharya came out of his deep meditation, on the very same day. He appeared before us a huge mass of divine consciousness. His very first question to was, "Where did Shri Kamakoti Acharya perform Vyasa Puja?" We replied it was at Madhyarjuna (Tiruvidaimarudur). His Holiness Sri Sringeri Sankaracharya made glorious references about our Holiness. We narrated to him the politico-religious situation and about our Kanchi Kamakoti Paramacharya's efforts to unify all the religious institutions in order to make a concerted move to get constitutional safeguard for our religion. He replied with a beaming face: Only Sri Kanchi Acharya understands the atmosphere precisely and knows what is fittest to do in the prevalent atmosphere. We all depend on what he does in this regard. We are very grateful to him. If the Hindus are able to maintain Dharma even to this extent it is primarily due to Sri Kanchi Acharya".

Then and there he called one Shri Sangameswara Sastri and ordered him to accompany us to other Mutts having connection with Sri Sringeri, like, Theerthamukthapuri and Hariharaur to help us in persuading those Matadhipathis to join hands in our Paramacharya's schemes.

We returned back to Sringeri after visiting these Mutts and conveyed our gratitude to His Holiness Sri Sringeri Acharya. In turn His Holiness asked us to convey his gratitude to Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Acharya for his task towards religious revival.

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Another incident of great importance: Originally the Drafting Committee had included religion and religious institutions in the "State list" of the Constitution. When His Holiness Sri Kanchi Acharya's attention was drawn to this he said "Religion of India is one. It does not differ on the basis of States. Similarly the religious institutions also belong to the whole of India. Therefore this item should be transferred from the State list". Though His Holiness did not put it in words, it is possible that he also saw prophetically that some day even parties professing irreligiousness may come to power in some of the States in which case religious institutions would have to suffer very badly.

We conveyed the views of His Holiness to the members of Constituent Assembly, but they were afraid to take up the issue because even then Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was feeling that the Central list was

overburdened. Anyhow as the *Taposhakti* of His Holiness would have it, somebody made bold in the party meeting to refer to the amendment we wanted. And the wonder of it! No less a person than Jawaharlal Nehru himself changed his opinion on the spur of the moment, and proposed that religious institutions should be included in the Concurrent list. The proposal was moved all at once—This was a very great gain—certainly not for His Holiness, who is beyond loss and gain, but it was a great gain for Hinduism, and for that matter, any religion which has a following in India.

EMBODIMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

By

SRI KRIPANANDA VARIAR

There are in the world numerous religions, numerous parties, numerous castes, numerous races, numerous philosophies But everyone in the world, without any difference, desires to be happy. Nobody in the world thinks of inviting unhappiness. So the divergent world is one in its pursuit of happiness. The happiness got by money, education and position is not lasting. True enlightenment alone confers eternal happiness. Enlightenment is Being, where Being itself is Knowing. Arunagirinathar refers to the eternal bliss of those who know knowing (அறிவை அறிபவர் அறியும் இன்பம்). Tirunavukkarasar who is wisdom incarnate says we are ever happy; never unhappy (இன்பமே எந்நாளும் துன்பமில்லை). The fog of misery is entirely dispelled by the fire of enlightenment.

Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankaracharya, who is called Periaval (the Great One), is an Embodiment of this Enlightenment which is Eternal Bliss. He also causes the unhappiness of devotees to be crushed away, by his mere glance. Even without the devotee's expressing his distress His Holiness delves deep into his thoughts. knows his misery and showers grace, the cloud of compassion that he is.

His benign face is smeared with sacred ash—ash which is a burnt residue and which in its turn burns the residual Karma of the devotee; His lotus like eyes, dripping the honey of compassion; His mouth ever fragrant with the Vedas; His pure body adorned with rudraksha; His frail limbs reflecting great tapas; and his beautiful feet casting away the Karma of devotees—such is the form of His Holiness, a darshan of which is the greatest fortune for one born on this earth.

His great love towards humanity knows no bounds. At the same time his great detachment is being maintained strictly. This curious mixture of love and detachment will be doubly impressed in the minds of the true devotee if only one sees His Holiness in the correct perspective.

He makes us see the right path—and so, is a *margadarsin*: He sees ahead with his phophetic vision—and is therefore a *dirghadarsin.*

Once His Holiness was camping at Srisailam which enshrines one of the Jyothir lingas. Preliminaries in connection with the Kumbhabhishekam of the Sankara Mutt were in progress there. The father of one Sri Radhakrishnan, Tamil Pandit in a High School in Trichy, was serving in the Mutt for quite a long time. Just three days prior to the Kumbhabishekam His Holiness called him and blessed him. He asked the Manager to give the required cash to that gentleman and asked him to go to his home town. The gentleman was deeply pained. He considered himself to be highly unfortunate, not being allowed to stay at Srisailam to see the Kumbhabhishekam. But he did not say anything against His Holiness's injunction. He took leave of His Holiness and came down to his daughter's house in Madras. That very day he passed away peacefully.

If only that gentleman had stayed in Srisailam the Kumbhabhishekam itself could

not have been performed because of pollution.

There are numerous incidents of this sort.

At one time His Holiness was doing Puja for Chandramoulisvara. The image of the Divine Mother was attired in a beautiful silk garment. Thousands of devotees were witnessing the Puja. In a remote corner were a mother and her young daughter. The daughter was fascinated by the silk garment placed on the Divine Mother and she desired to have it. In her innocence she pestered her mother to get the garment for her. The mother was trying her best to control the child, but without avail.

The Puja came to a close. His Holiness gave prasada to each and every one of those assembled. When the turn of the mother and child came, His Holiness went to the Puja Mandapa, took the silk garment off the Divine Mother and gave it to that child, his own face wreathed in child-like smile. The mother just wondered how His Holiness came to know of the desire of the child sitting in a remote corner.

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The greatness of His Holiness cannot be contained in tomes after tomes of panegyrics. Like the perennial river Kaveri which takes its origin in Coorg and flows down through forests and deserts, His Holiness who takes his origin from the Supreme one comes to us all himself, town after town, village after village without our having to go to Him. Wherever he goes he elevates the people of the place.

It is not necessary that His Holiness should go to a place bodily to elevate a person. Just as the sun, which is millions and millions of miles away from us, causes the tiny lotus to blossom, His Holiness causes the hearts of far distant devotees to blossom. Just as the lotus takes its birth in slush, we take our birth in the slush of desire. Anyhow His Holiness makes us blossom into the beautiful lotus. The Himalayas never move. But the waters of Ganga born of the Himalayas are ever moving for the benefit of humanity. So also His Holiness is unmoveable as he has completely severed himself off from desires and attachments. Anyhow from the mouth of this unmoving mount flows the Ganga of wisdom.

It is usually said that those who live in the age of Rama and Krishna are blessed. There is no doubt that we who live during the time of the Embodiment of Enlightenment that is called Kamakoti are thrice blessed. The dust that is trodden by the feet of His Holiness becomes a place of pilgrimage. Let those feet be ever installed in our heart and let our minds be ever turned towards Him who has become Siva through Tapas.

HIS HOLINESS AND THE RED INDIAN

By

FRITHJOF SCHUON

It happened during my first visit to the Red Indians of the North American Plains, ten years ago. A spiritual encounter between His Holiness the Jagadguru and a Red Indian holy man has taken place, through the medium of a picture of His Holiness and a prayer of the Red Indian.

It came about in this way: I was in Sheridan in the State of Wyoming, with my travelling companion, during the All Indian Days; one morning while walking across an open space where the tents or tipis, of many Red Indians of different tribes were pitched, we heard a voice which seemed to be calling us; we went in that direction and approached one of the tents, asking if somebody had called us and were told that they had. An old man was there, and a younger woman with some children also present. The old man wanted to know where we came from and who we were, and we told him everything and began to talk about spiritual matters and about the ancient American Indian religion. The old man explained that they were Cheyenne Indians; he spoke about the Sun Dance and said: "Our religion is the same as what is in the Holy Scriptures; God—the Great Spirit—cannot be seen, He is pure Spirit."

"The Sun and the Earth" he added, "are not gods, but they are like Father and Mother to us; and all the things of Nature, such as streams and rocks, are holy."

He told us that he was a very important priest of the Cheyennes, the so-called "Keeper of the Sacred Arrows"; these are the holy objects of the Cheyenne tribe. They are marvellously beautiful, the old man said, but they are always hidden in a sacred bundle, which is opened only on very few occasions. We were told that these Arrows had been brought to his tribe some thousand years ago; that they had been brought by a "Spirit Man", who was transparent; and that the whole tribe witnessed the event at that remote time. The Spirit Man said: "As long as you keep these Arrows, your people will not disappear; if you lose them, the rivers and the grass will dry up". And the old priest added: "May be this would mean the end of the world".

Then I showed to him some pictures I had with me; one was the image of His Holiness the Jagadguru of Kanchipuram. I spoke to the old Cheyenne priest about Hinduism and explained to him who His Holiness was. He took the picture in one hand and raised the other hand towards the sky; this is the Red Indian's gesture of prayer. He prayed a long time, always looking at the picture; and after a while, he put his hand on it and then rubbed his face and his breast with the hand, in the Indian way, to impregnate himself with the Jagadguru's blessing. At last he kissed the picture with fervour; during the whole scene, I also prayed inwardly with him, and so did my companion.

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A few years after this meeting, we heard that the Cheyenne holy man—Last Bull was his name—had passed away.

One of my friends then visited His Holiness the Jagadguru and gave him a book

on Red Indian religion called "The Sacred Pipe"; and His Holiness, after having read it, pointed out that the rites of the Red Indians present striking analogies with certain Vedic rites.

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A few words should be said here about this ancient American religion, or more precisely that of the Plains and Woodland Indians. The most eminent manifestations of the "Great Spirit" are the Cardinal Points together with Zenith and Nadir, or with Heaven and Earth, and next in order are such as the Sun and the Morning Star. Although the Great Spirit is One, He comprises in Himself all those qualities the traces of which we see and the effects of which we experience in the world of appearances. The East is Light and Knowldge and also Peace; the South is Warmth and Life, therefore also Growth and Happiness; the West is fertilizing Water and also Revelation speaking in lightning and thunder; the North is Cold and Purity, or Strength. Thus it is that the Universe, at whatever level it may be considered, whether of Earth, Man or Heaven, is dependent on the four primordial determinations: Light, Heat, Water, Cold.

A most striking feature of the North American branch of the Primordial Sanatana Dharma is the doctrine of the four yugas: the sacred animal of the Plains-Indians, the buffalo, symbolizes the mahayuga, each of its legs representing a yuga. At the beginning of this mahayuga a buffalo was placed by the Great Spirit at the West in order to hold back the waters which menace the earth; every year this bison loses a hair, and in every yuga it loses a foot. When it will have lost all its hair and its feet, the waters will overwhelm the earth and the mahayuga will be finished. The analogy with the bull of Dharma in Hinduism is very remarkable: at every yuga, this bull withdraws a foot, and spirituality loses its strength; and now we are near the end of the kali-yuga. Like the orthodox Hindus, the traditional Red Indians have this conviction, which is obviously true inspite of all the mundane optimism of the modern world; but let us add that the compensation of our very dark age is the Mercy of the Holy Name, as it is emphasized in the Manava-Dharma Shastra and the Shrimad Bhagavata and other holy scriptures.

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All this may give the impression of a rather singular contribution in honour of His Holiness the Jagadguru; but it is in reality not so unrelated, and this for three main reasons: firstly, it is certainly a great event that, for the first time in history, a Red Indian holy man manifests his love for a Hindu holy man; secondly, this apparently small incident reminds us of the unity of the Primordial Sanatana Dharma, which is more or less hidden beneath the many forms of intrinsically orthodox Tradition; and this unity is especially represented by the very function of the Jagadguru, who incarnates the Universal Truth. Thirdly, this little incident marking a symbolical encounter between a Red Indian priest and a Hindu priest was in fact an act of prayer; and it shows us that in prayer all earthly differences such as space and time are transcended, and that in prayer we are all united in one state of purity and in one perfume of Deliverance.

A BUDDHIST GARLAND FOR THE JAGADGURU

By

MARCO PALLIS

It was with not a little surprise, coupled with a strong sense of occasion, that I read the letter inviting me to contribute to the Souvenir collection marking the 76th birthday of His Holiness of Kanchi, an auspicious occasion indeed! This contribution is made with all the greater willingness since its author is a Buddhist by traditional participation and intends to speak from that angle.

But is this proper, some may ask, for how can a professing Buddhist presume to write in honour of one who bears Sri Sankaracharya's august title, associated as this has been in the past with the turning back of the tide of Buddhism in India? Is not such a person disqualified from doing so or, alternatively, is he not in a sense betraying that tradition of the Lord Buddha to which he himself is dharmically attached? In either case such an action is blameworthy, so these critics will argue.

To which I will answer that not only is it proper for a Buddhist to act in this manner now, but also that there is a particular value in his doing so, both for his own sake and also for the sake of others inasmuch as he will be enabled thereby to bring out certain aspects of truth too often overlooked.

First of all, it is important to point out, quoting one whose name is well known among the friends of Kanchi Kamakoti, namely Frithjof Schuon, that the inhibitive part played by the Adi-Sankaracharya versus the Buddhists of his time in no wise implies an inability on his part to grasp the essence of the Buddha's teaching at its own level: the Master of Advaita Vedanta quite obviously was capable of situating any knowledge regardless of the formal limits attaching to its dialectical expression. It was indeed no accident that certain Hindus belonging to other schools accused him of uttering a doctrine that was but a disguised form of Buddhism; however outrageous such a statement may appear at first sight, it does nevertheless harbour a truth pertaining to a more "interior" dimension, one that was, however, hidden from those who offered the above criticism. This interior view of the matter, discoverable "beyond forms", does not affect the nature of Sri Sankaracharya's specific function of appointed restorer and illuminator of the Hindu *Dharma*; in discharging this function, as Frithjof Schuon has also pointed out, the great Vedantic Sage had no particular call to spare another traditional form which, though essentially true, did not fit in with the characteristic exigencies of Hinduism; had Buddhism done so, it would have become yet another Hindu *dharsana*, but such in fact was not its *dharmic* destiny.

All this is perfectly intelligible to a Buddhist viewing the matter in a spirit of non-attachment, just as on the other hand a Hindu similarly motivated is able to see that the Lord Buddha did not set out to "reform" Hinduism and that his teaching represented a spontaneous manifestation of the Spirit at that "cyclic moment" which rendered it opportune;

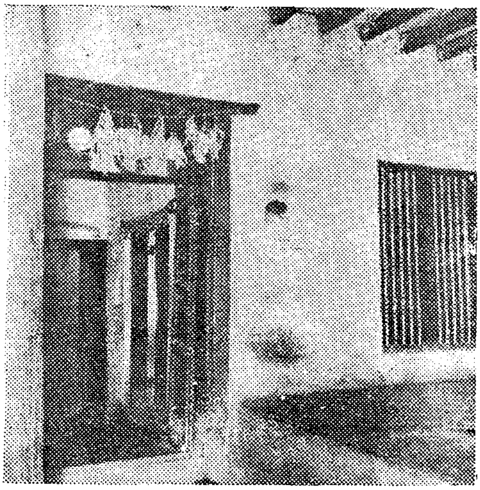
there could be no question here of human contrivance.

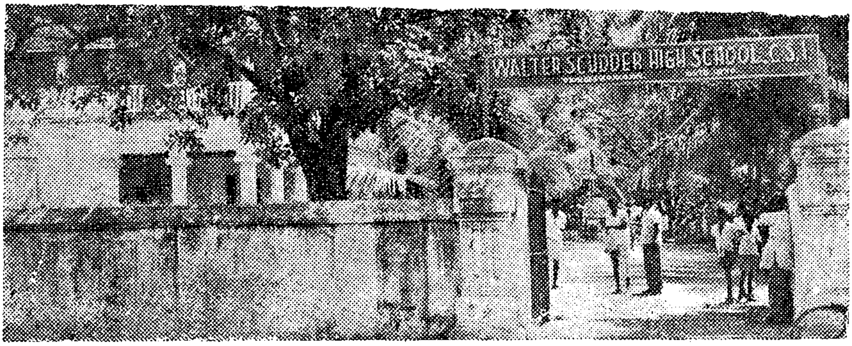
Judging after the event, it is also evident that the Buddhic revelation was, among other things, a means of rendering the Indian wisdom accessible to non-Indian races to whose mentality this presentation was perfectly suited. The marvellous flowering of the Mahayana in China, Japan and Tibet is a living proof that such was the case; for this result to become possible, however, a certain departure from the specifically Hindu norms was necessary. All this goes to show that in the realm of traditional forms a given conflict can bring its own compensations; it also shows that such a conflict does not only have a negative function, it also has a providential, therefore positive, function in regard to those sections of humanity respectively concerned in it.

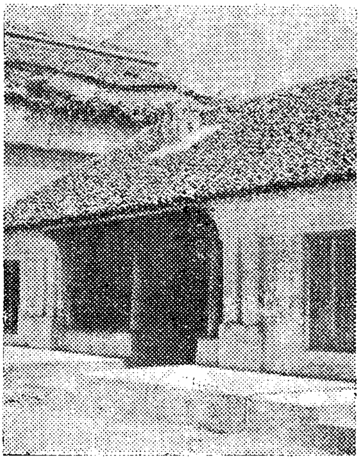
There is no occasion now to recapitulate the arguments formerly put forward by the Sages and Saints who acted as spokesmen of the two traditions in the course of their debates with one another; some of those arguments bore fruit in ways that much exceeded their temporary purpose, as when Sri Sankaracharya used his controversy with the Buddhists as a means for giving point to his masterly exposition of the doctrine of *Atma*, by which jnanically-minded men are still illuminated today just as they were in his own time. We can all thank God that this same light still shines in Kanchi Kamakoti and that the voice of Dharma has never been silenced in that hallowed place.

By way of special tribute on this joyful occasion of the 76th birthday of His Holiness of Kanchi the present writer wishes to draw attention to a formula belonging to the Semitic wisdom, as illustrating in a most remarkable way the metaphysical reciprocity between the Vedantic teaching about the Self and the Buddhist *anatma* which many people have regarded as marking irreconcilable positions; this formula is the *Shahadah* or 'Testimony' of Islam in which the advaitic doctrine is summed up with miraculous conciseness. A moment's glance will show that the Arabic words *La ilaha illa' Llah* : "There is no divinity (or reality, or self) outside *THE DIVINITY* (or Reality, or Self)" enshrines at one and the same time the truth of the Buddhist *anatma* and the Vedantic *Atma*; like Buddhism it "annihilates" any belief in the reality of the world and its contents in order to make way for the only intrinsic Reality, the Divine Suchness or Self. Need anything be added to prove that Vedanta and Buddhism have a common link between them? To look in the mirror of a tradition other than one's own is sometimes a way to realize the truth of one's own tradition with all the greater certainty!

On the auspicious day of *Vaisaka Anuradha* this garland is laid, in deepest reverence, at the lotus-feet of His Holiness the Jagadguru of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha by the hand of Munishastra Dhara.







Top *(left:)* the Father

(middle:) as the school boy

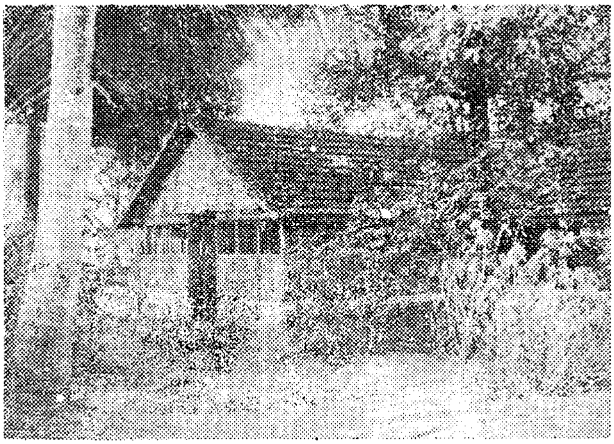
(right:) house and room where His Holiness was born in Villupuram

Centre *(left:)* the Mother

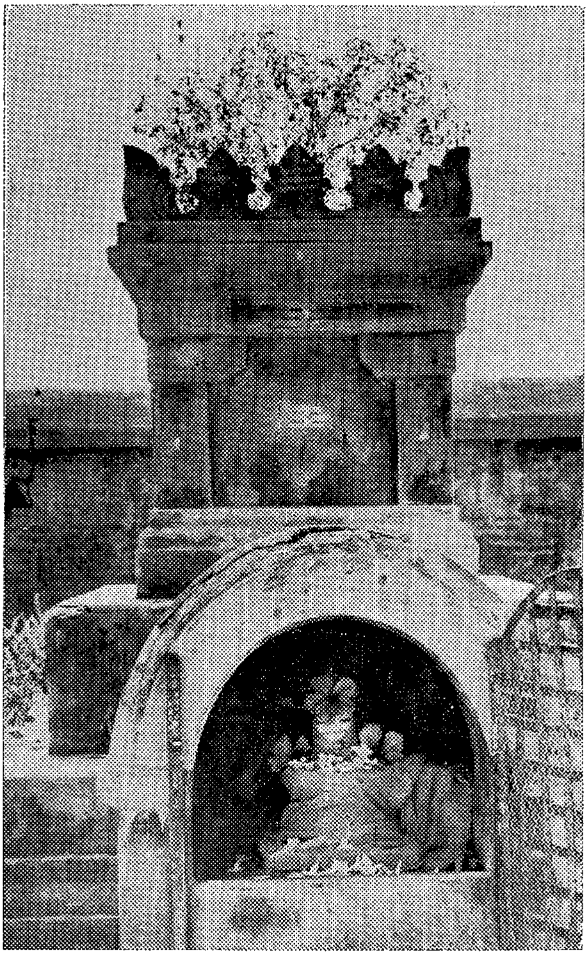
(right:) School at Tindivanam where he studied

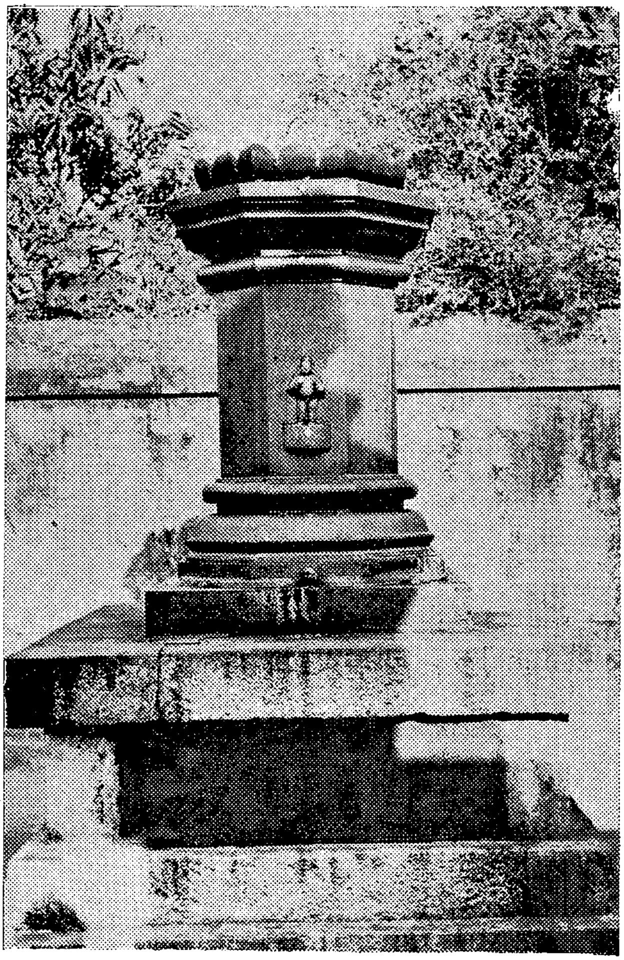
< House at Tindivanam

place of Vidyabhyasa in Mahendramangalam >



It was in this unostentatious surroundings that His Holiness and Mahatma Gandhi met (Nellisseri, Palghat)

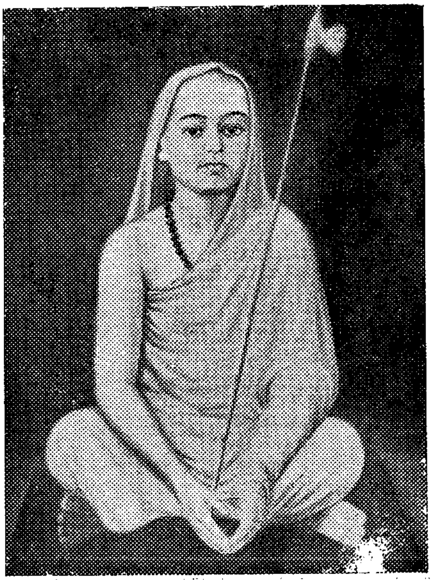


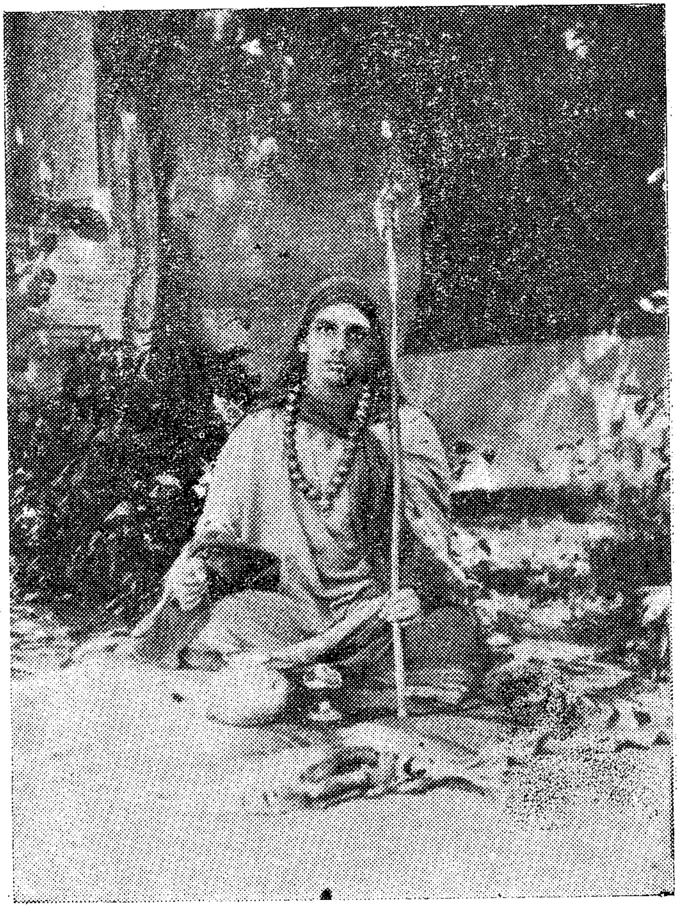


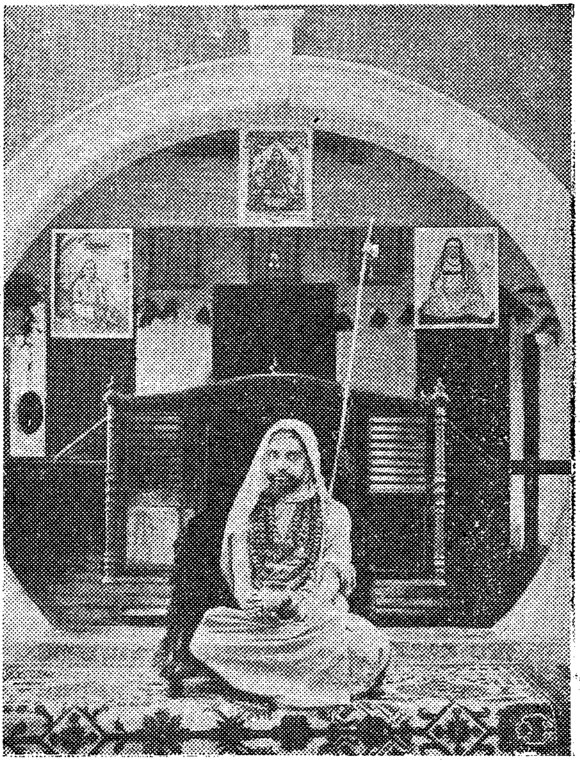
Samadhis of earlier Pontiffs of Kamakoti at Vadavambalam, Kalavai and Kumbhakonam

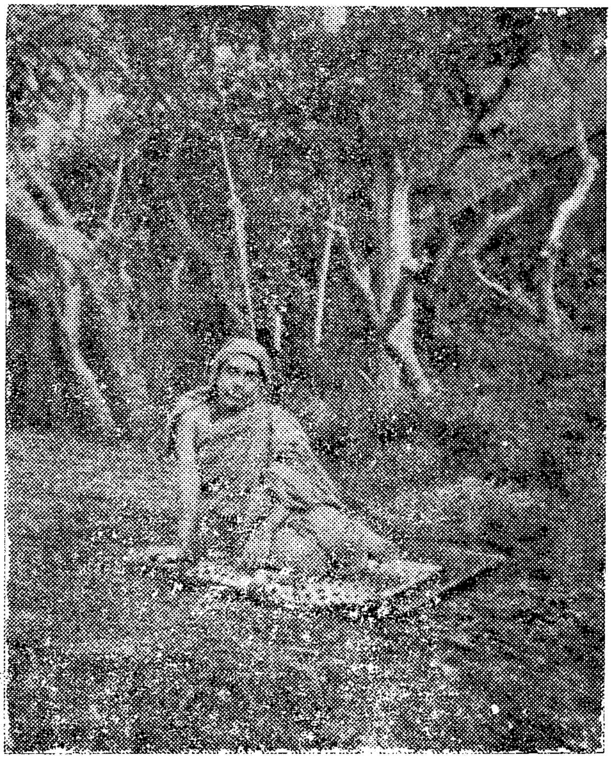
Below: The Present Acharya's immediate predecessor

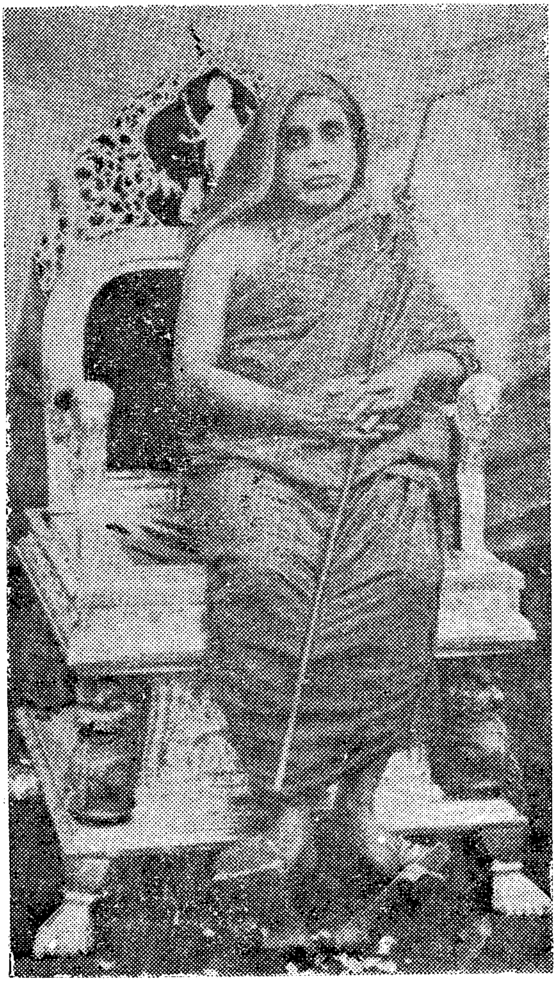
Facing page: Paramaguru of His Holiness. 66th Pontiff of Kamakoti



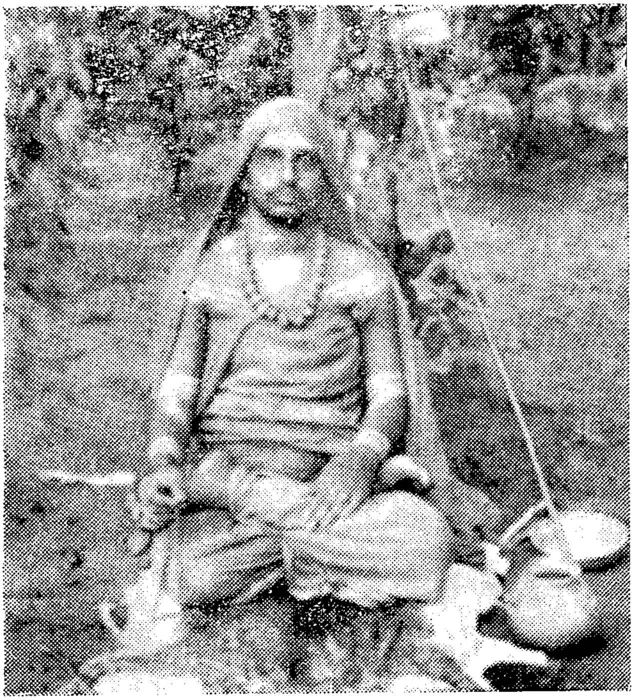






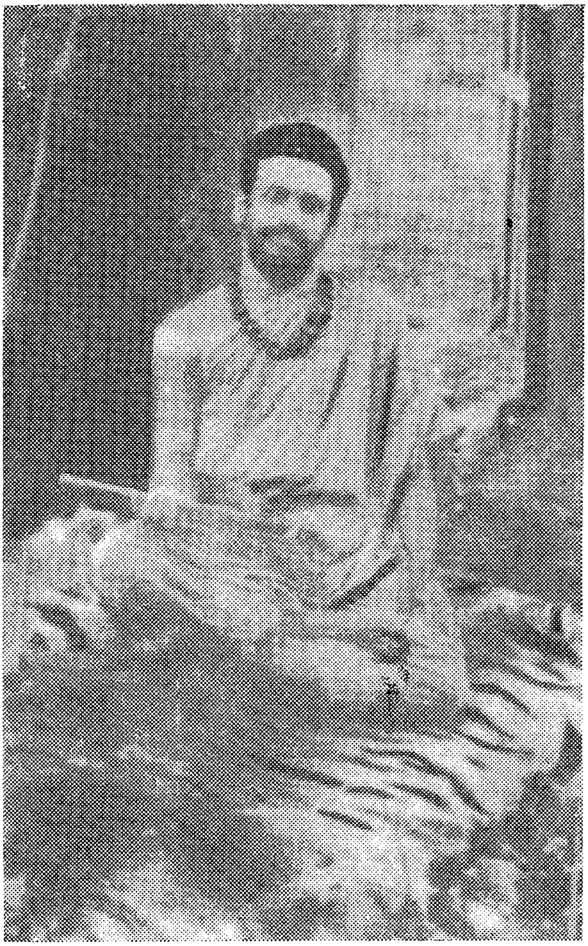


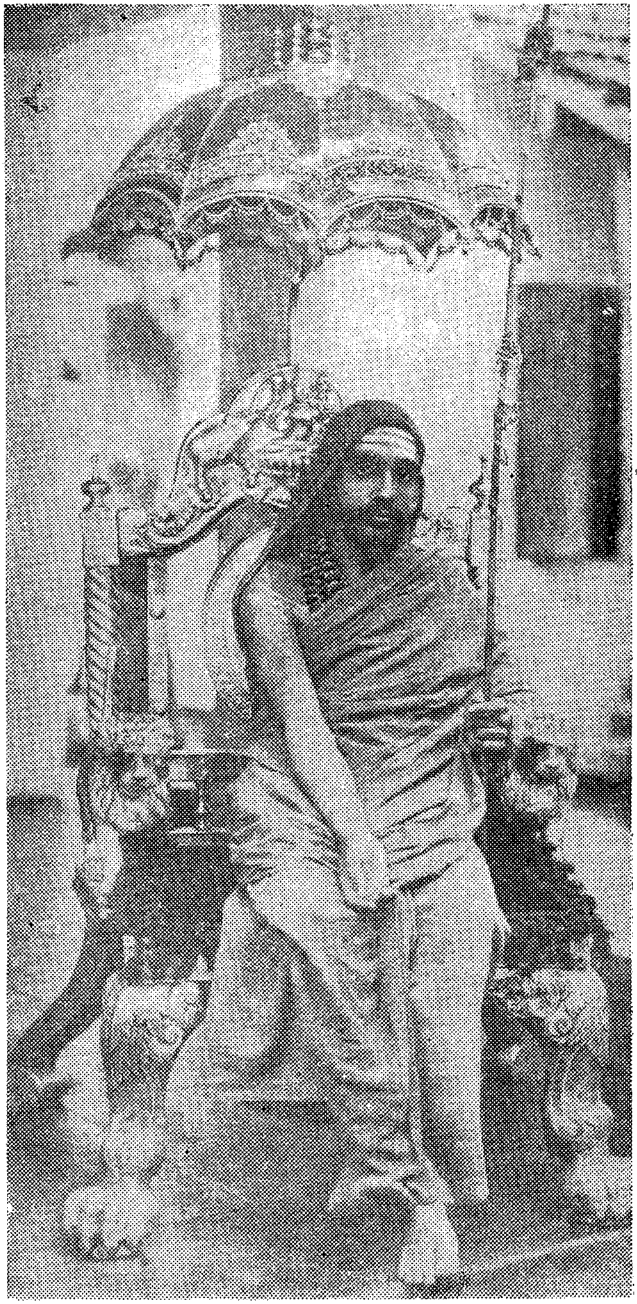
The same serenity, austerity and compassion right from the 'teens through the decades



Ageless mellowness with aged sannyasins in North India

Pictures alternately showing the stillness of Siva and the silkenness of Sakti

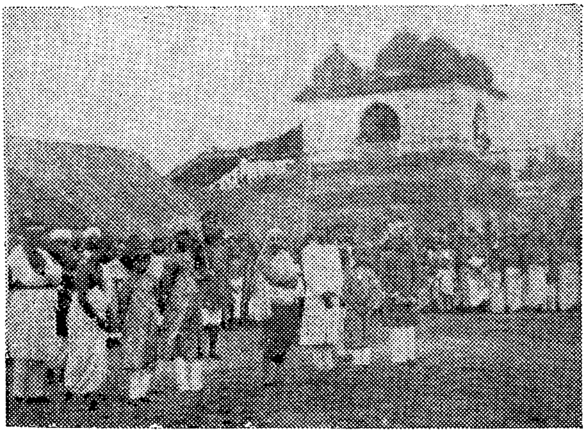


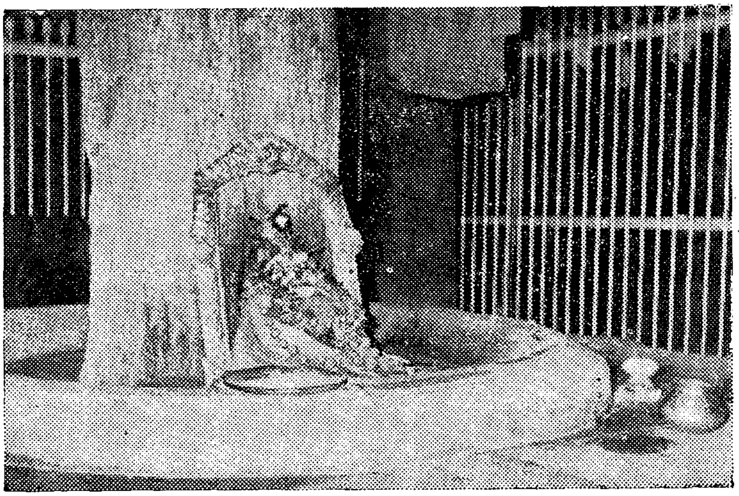


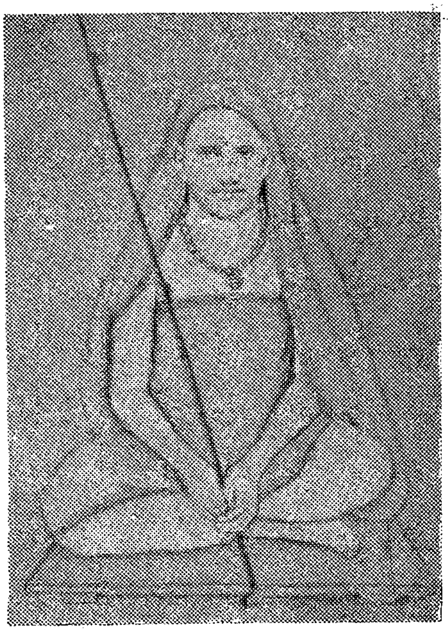
Top : Renunciation seated on tiger skin and throne

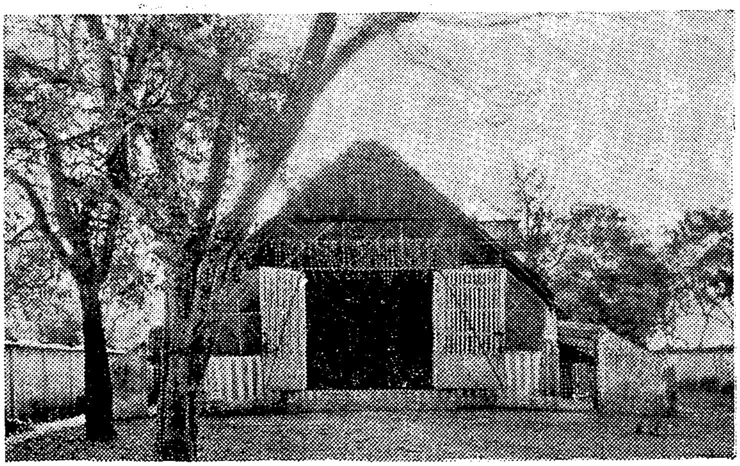
Bottom : *(left)* with the Tanjore Royal family,

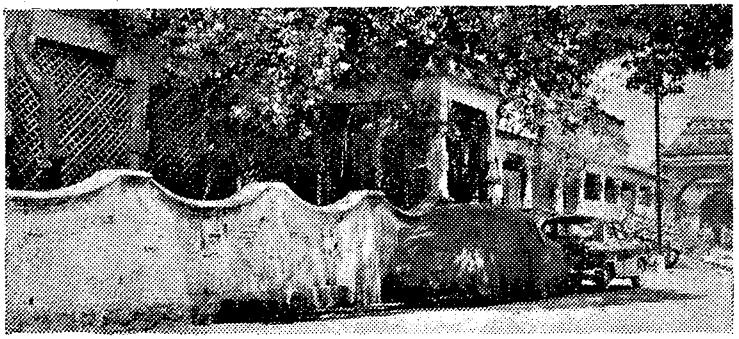
(right) at Kasi with Maharajah to his right and Malaviyaji to his left

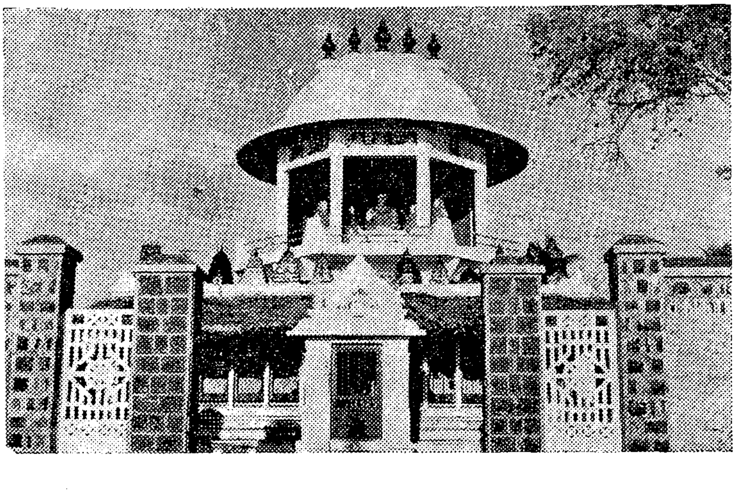


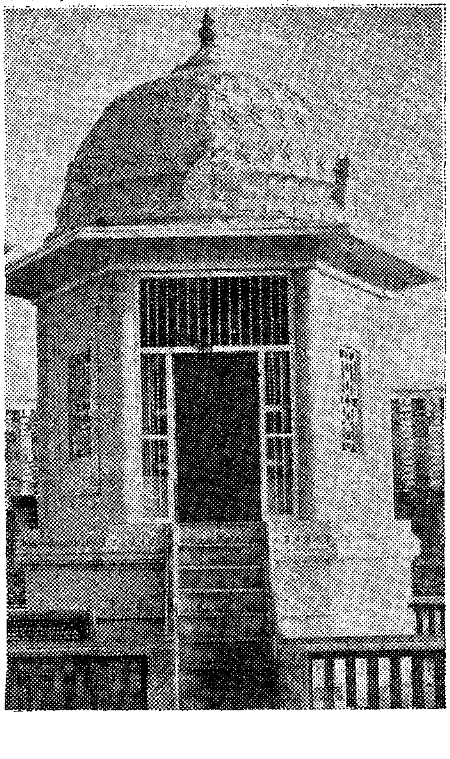












Top : *(left)* **Samadhi** of Sadasiva Brahmam

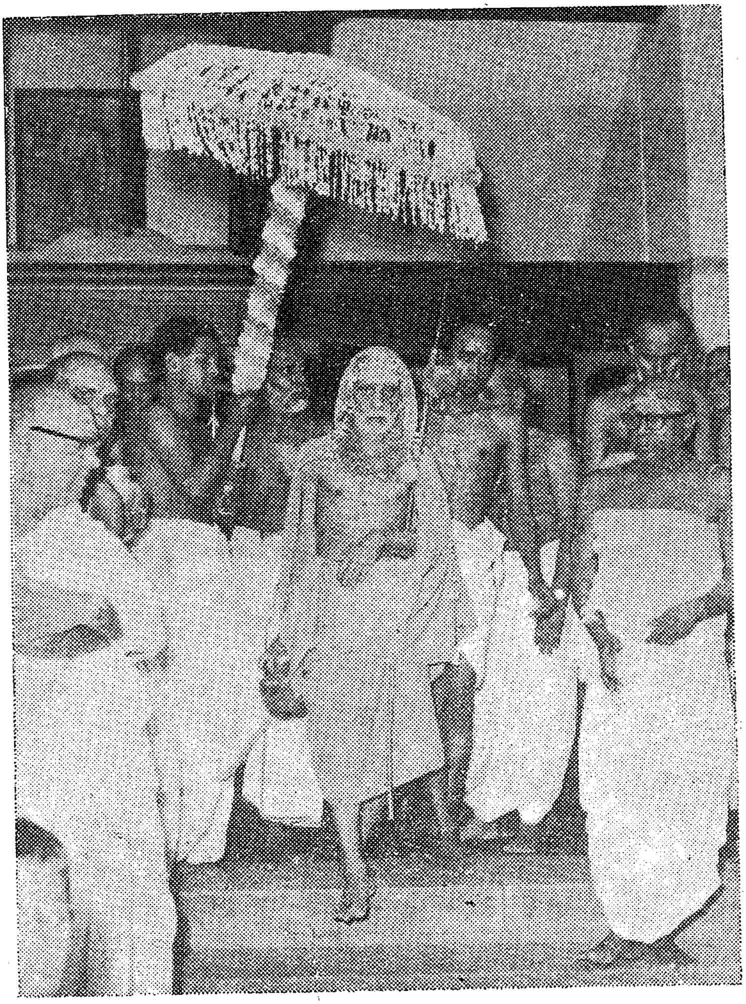
(right) The 65th Pontiff of Kamakoti

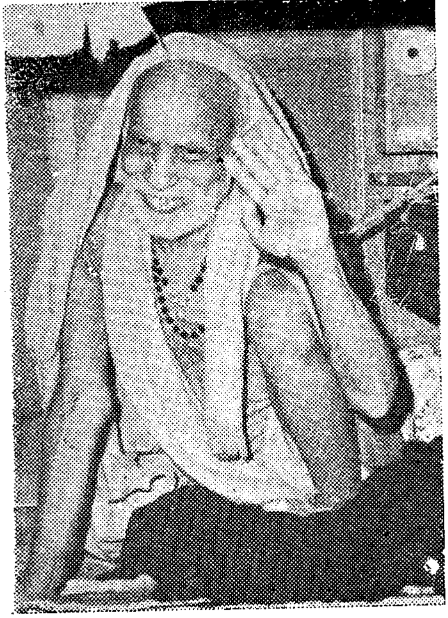
Middle *(above)* 65th Pontiff's **Samadhi** at Ilayatankudi

(below) the Math at Kumbakonam

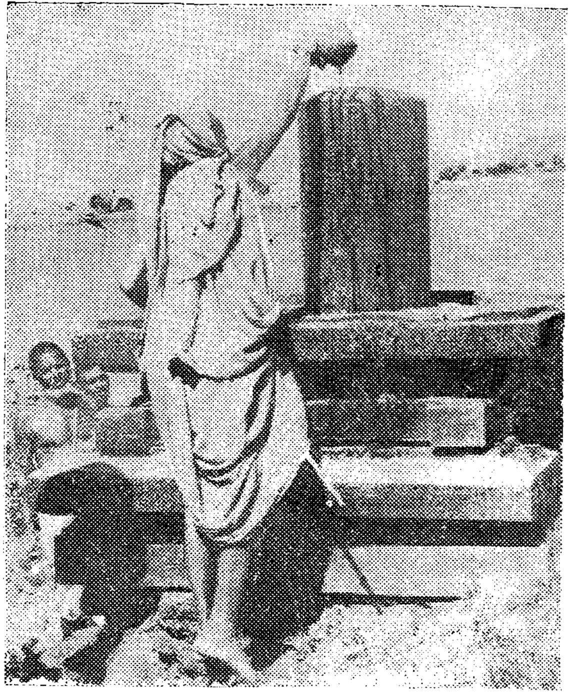
Bottom : *(left)* Ramesvaram Sankara Mandapa

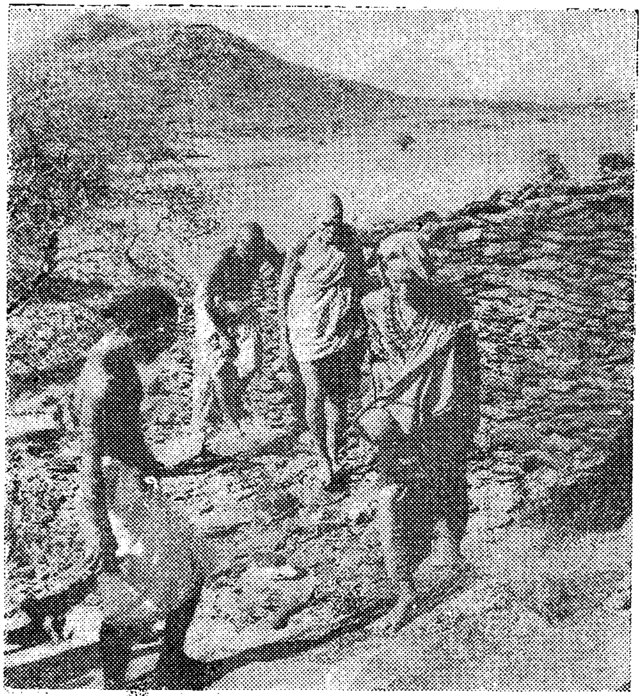
(right) Sankara Paduka in Kanyakumari





Top : Peace
Blessing
Bottom : Bliss
Bhakti





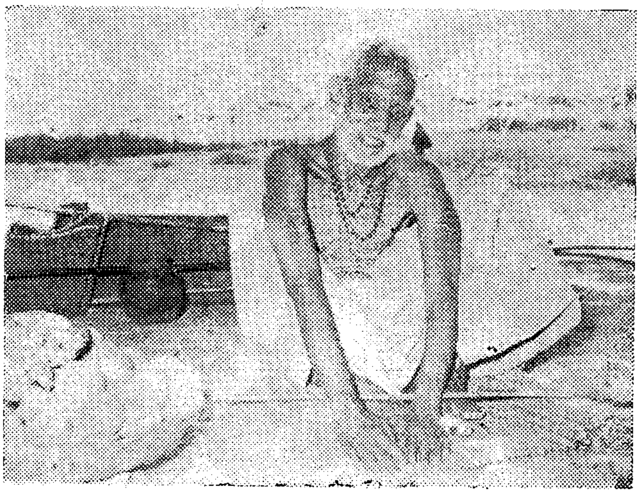
Top : *(left)* Abhisheka to Isvara that assuages our heart - burns

(right) to sacred spots through forest and hills in sweltering heat without even sandals on foot

Centre : the inexpressible joy of the sannyasin

Bottom : *(left)* with the lowliest and the last as part of nature

(right) grasping, as though, the Mother's feet



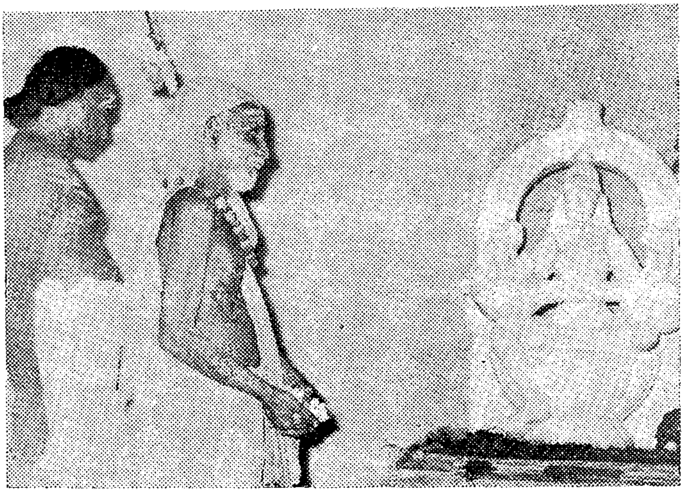
Top : *(left)* Master archaeologist pointing out an inscription *(middle)* joy of the detached

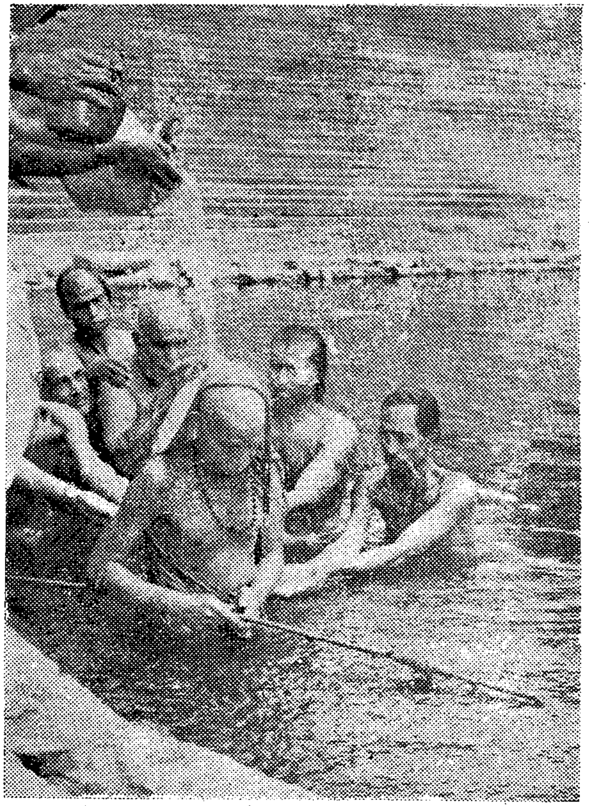
(right) in contemplation 'without shape or object'

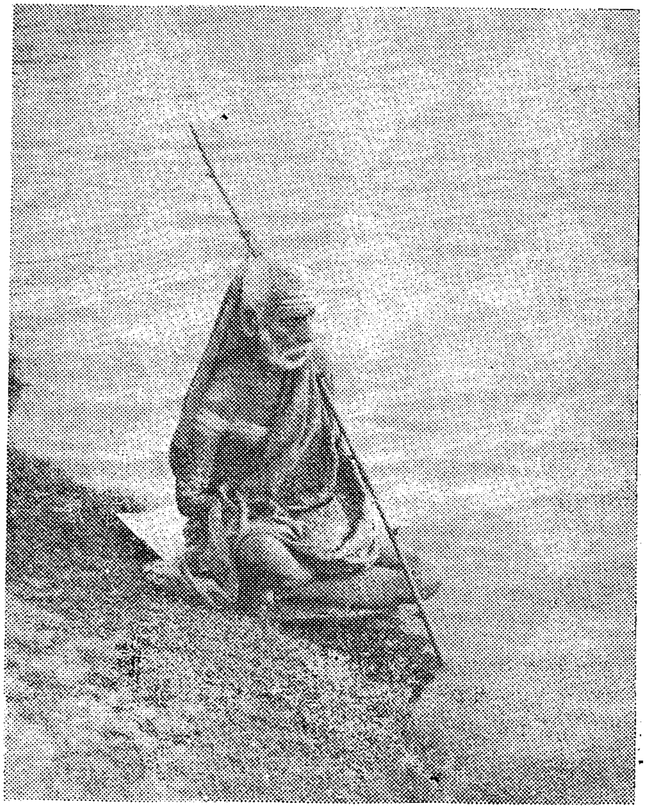
Centre : Chandrasekhara Sarasvati beaming with joy at seeing the Sarasvati image in Ramesvaram Math

Bottom : *(left)* 108 shawl **archana** to Sankara's sandals at Tiruvidaimarudur

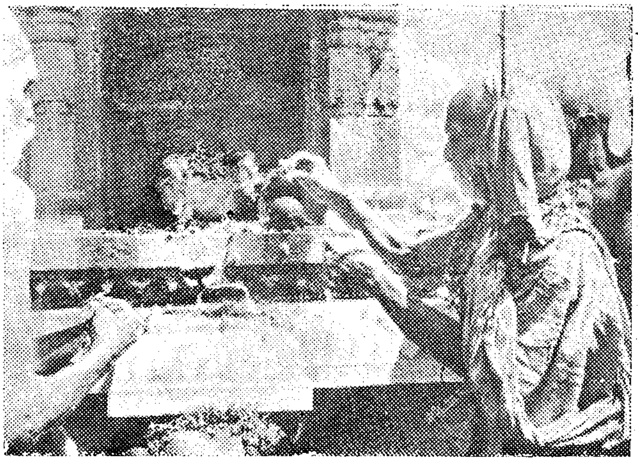
(right) in his usual posture, donning the Bilva garland in his usual way

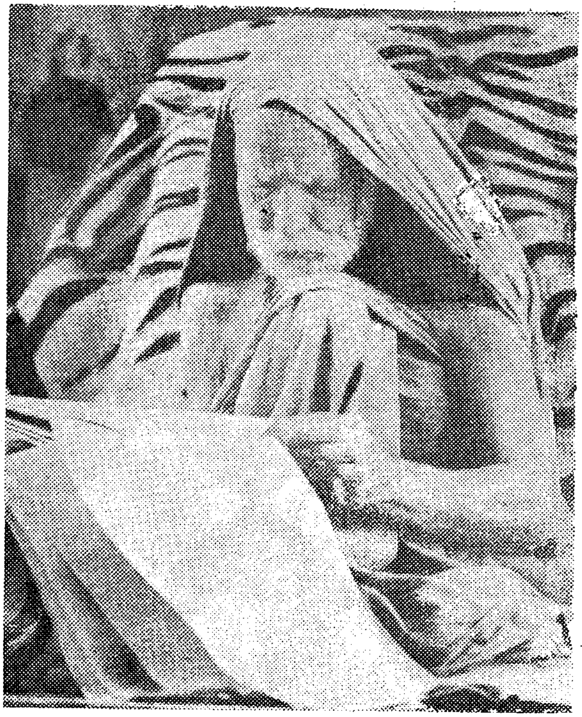


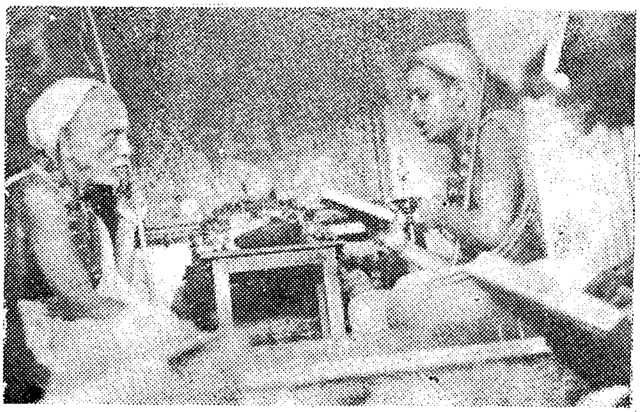


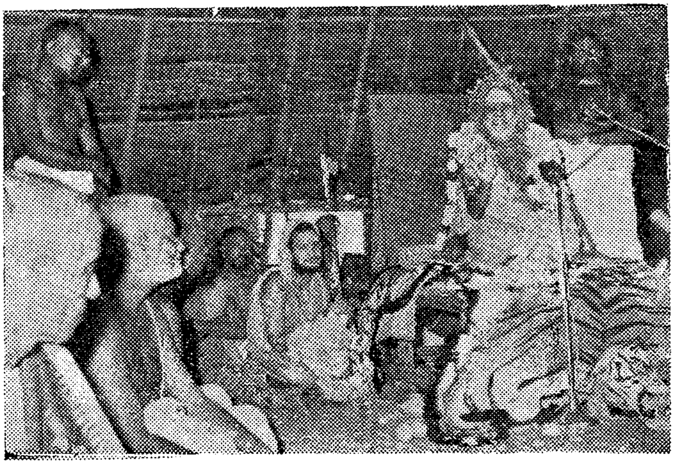


Top: *(left)* Devotees eager for the sacred Mahamakha water, rendered more sacred by His Holiness's contact; *(right)* in deep contemplation
Centre : Archana to Adi Sankara's sandals
Bottom : *(left)* in deep study
(right) imparting knowledge to Junior Holiness









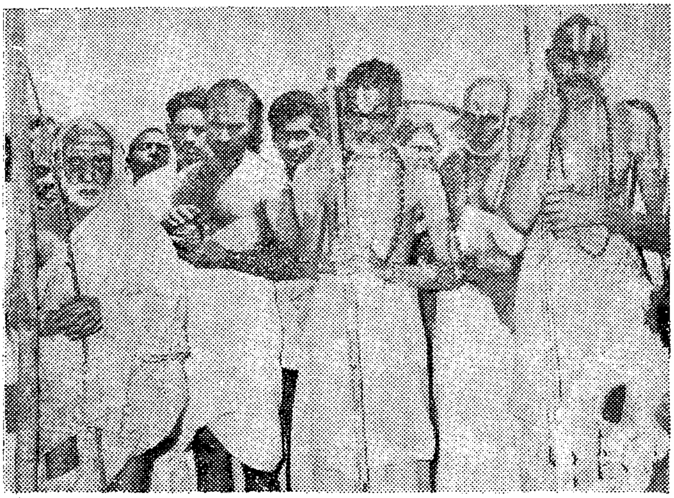
Top : *(left)* The first famous **sadas** at Ilayatankudi

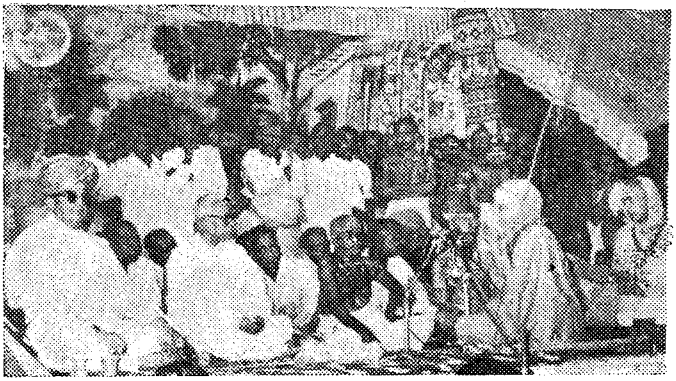
(middle) with Vaishnava Jeers at Bhadrachalam

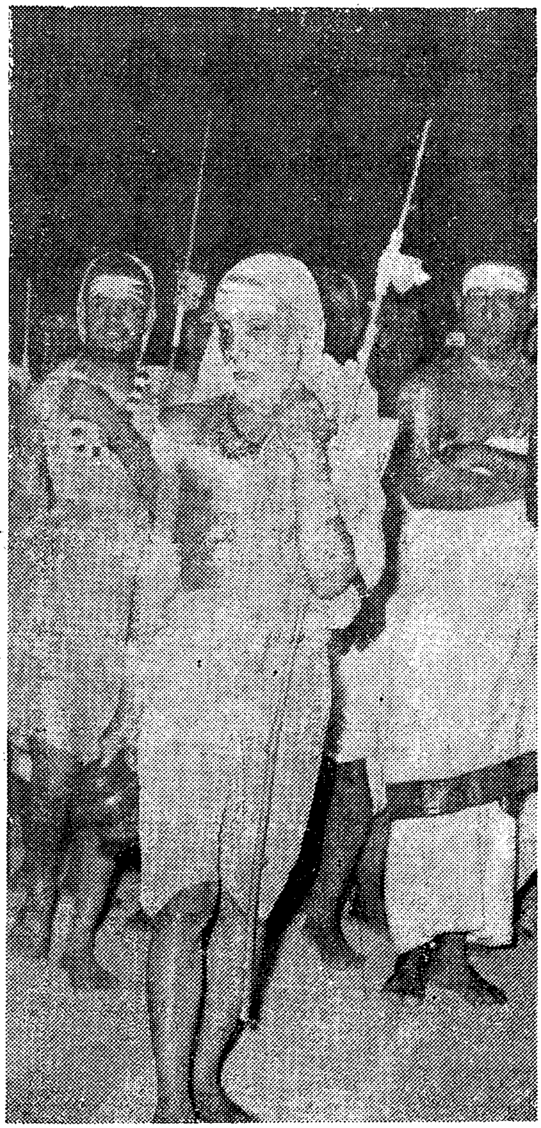
(corner down) with other heads of Maths in 'Deivika Peravai'

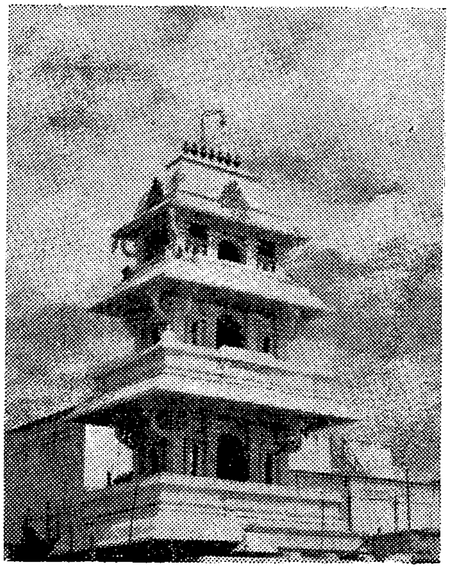
Bottom : *(left)* Kanchi Sadas: with the Maharajah of Mysore and Shri M. Bhakthavatsalam

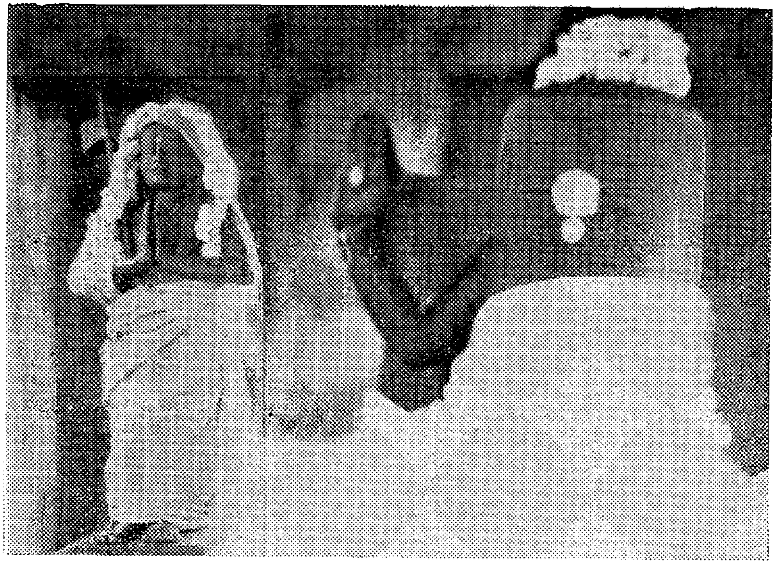
(right) at Rameswaram with Junior Holiness and Ramnad Royal Family

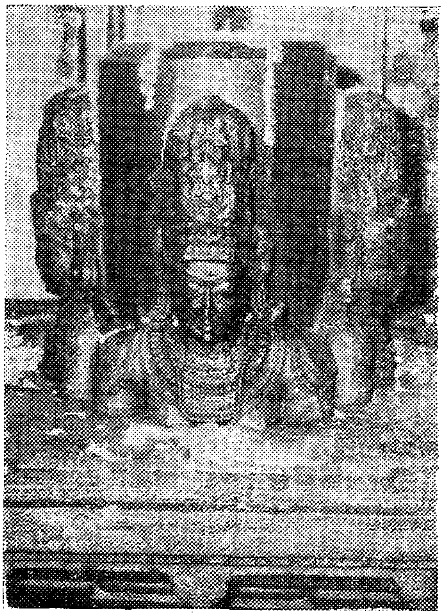


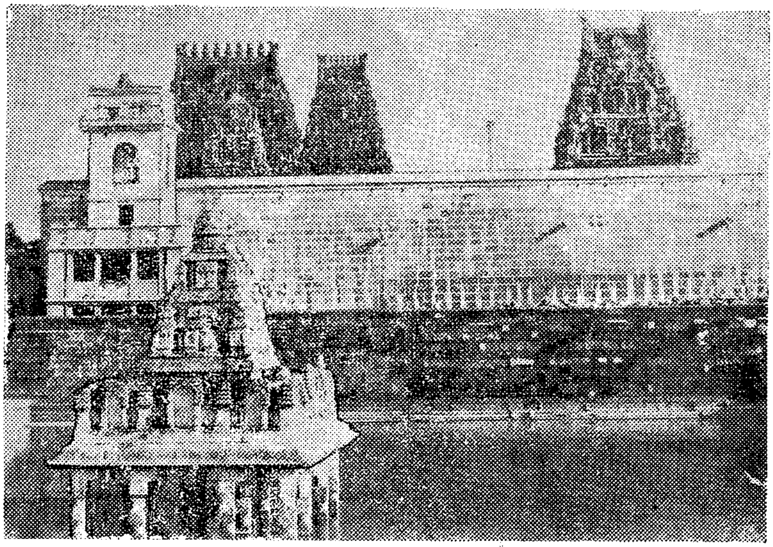








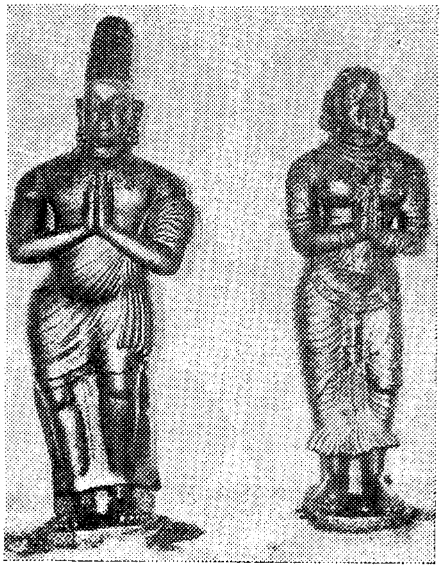


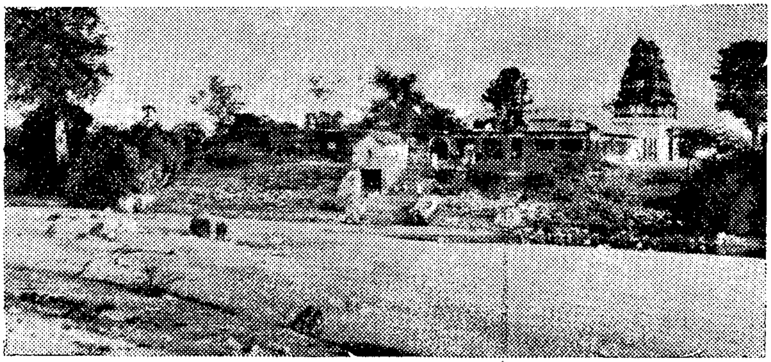


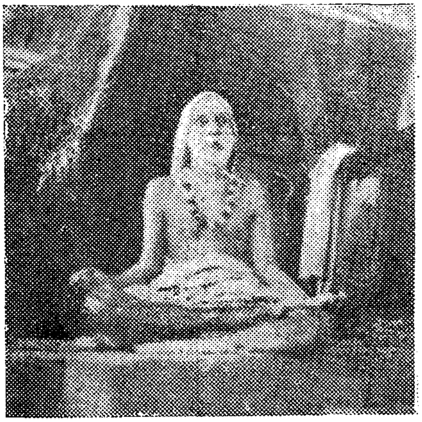
Top : *(left)* the Headquarters of the Math at Kanchi
(right) Hand of Siva coming out of Linga and proclaiming the truth of Advaita at Tiruvidaimarudur (Installed by His Holiness)

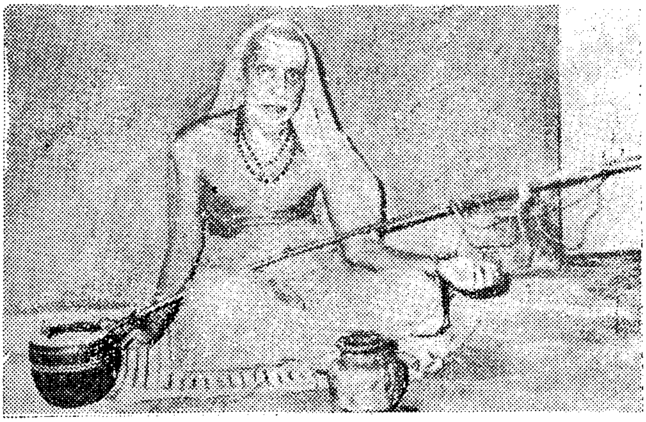
Centre : *(left)* Chaturmukha Linga unearthed by His Holiness at Tiruvanaikka; *(right)* A view of Shri Kamakshi Temple (Kanchi)

Bottom : *(left)* Images of Govinda Dikshita and his wife - ancestors of His Holiness (Pattisvaram)
(right) Pancha Ganga of Buggai, His Holiness's fond resort







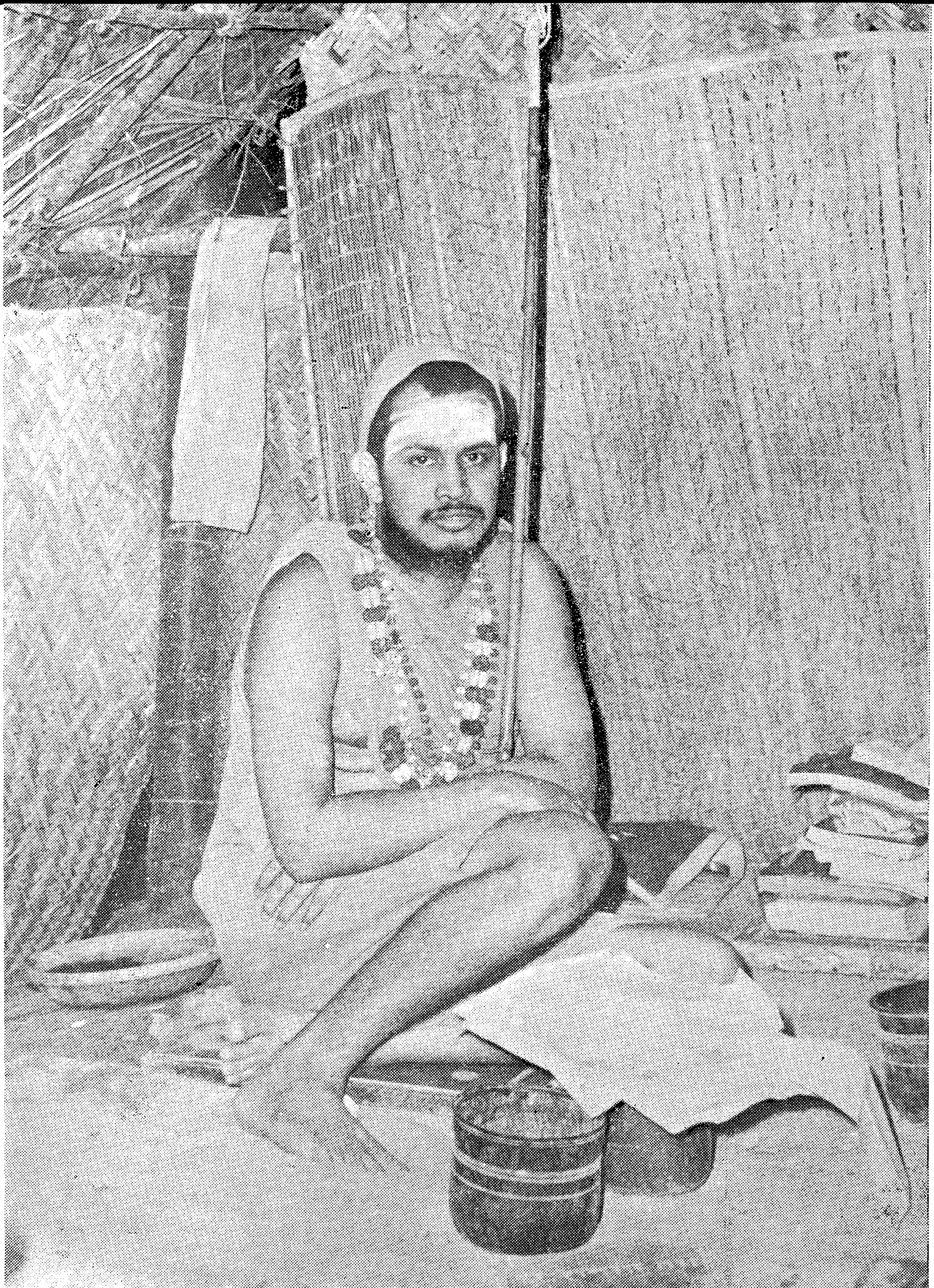


The King among ascetics in various depths of *nishtha*.

Overleaf :

His Holiness Sri Jayendra Sarasvati Swamiji, 69th Pontiff of Kamakoti.

(Photos : T. V. Krishnaswami, J. Sadagopan, Visvanath, Mooka, Sundaresan, Pushpaturai Subramanian).



"HE HAS NEVER LEFT US"

By

D. M. MATHESON.

[Mr. D. M. Matheson, C.B.E. (London) is a person of great spiritual realization and a staunch traditionalist—naturally, he is an ardent admirer of His Holiness Sri Kamakoti Acharya, whom he had the honour of meeting a decade ago. Very old and ailing, Mr. Matheson regrets his inability to give us an article, but has been pleased to send the following message—*Ed.*]

All over the world, and even in India, the forces opposed to Tradition and to the Sanatana Dharma gather momentum and become more and more manifest, so it was a very special pleasure to learn of the Conference to be held to mark the 76th Birthday of H. H. Paramacharya Swamiji of Kanchi. We pray that it may be richly blessed with success and serve as a warning to many against those forces and of the danger inherent in dilution or distortion of the Tradition, however plausibly advocated.

My wife and I vividly recall the evening 10 years ago in Madras when we had the great privilege of being received in audience by His Holiness when he graciously accepted the dedication to him by M. Frithjof Schuon of his book *The Language of the Self* which I had had a hand in translating. In a sense we feel he has never left us, but his physical presence is surely of even greater value to India today than it was then because of the growth of the forces opposed to all he so eminently represents. May I add our prayers for the success of your Conference.

A RARE PHENOMENON OF THIS YUGA

By

POOJYA VAMADEVA MUNI.

Rajaguru of Thailand

We had the opportunity of undertaking a pilgrimage to sacred Bharat in October, 1968. During this pilgrimage, we had the feeling that we stayed beneath the cool shade of intimate friendliness.

Our feeling of joy at the prospect of this pilgrimage is due to our having heard in our young age the reports of our Revered Father, Maharaja Guru Vidhi Shri Vishuddhiguna, who had visited India. From then on, the longing to have *darshan* of Bharat has ever been lingering in our heart. Sacred Bharat is the source of *Dharma* pervading throughout the world. Its greatness is unparalleled. Every dust of the soil of Bharat has a history of its own. This is no exaggeration, for the whole world of the wise ones has recognised this truth.

We are thankful to Sri Karuna Kusalalaya, and his friend, now living in Delhi, for it was they that built a bridge for us to go to the God who moves on this earth—Jagadguru Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peethadhipati. When we think of the great fortune that was ours in having visited Vijayawada and offered worship to Sri Jagadguru, when we think of the opportunity to have seen the hoary Seat of Sri Adi Sankara—naturally our profound thanks go to those who laid the path for this pilgrimage.

It was on Monday, October 14, 1968, that we had *darshan* of Sri Jagadguru Sankaracharya in the holy atmosphere of Kamakoti Peetha. Then we had the feeling of standing before all our ancestors united into a single person. As if bearing testimony to the truth of this feeling, hundreds of Brahmins assembled in the courtyard were chanting the different branches of the hoary Vedas in the traditional way.

Vedic Pandits from all over India had assembled there underneath the shade of the tree of Kamakoti, and we opened out our ears to drink deep of their Vedic chant. This was the first occasion in our life to attend a Vedic Conference on such a grand scale and hear the Vedic recitations in such a big way. For the first time, we found out the differences in *svaras* in chanting the four Vedas. Our mind was over-joyed to hear the Vedas delivered in pure intonation. In particular, our heart was filled with the Ghana Patha of Krishna Yajurveda.

In the night, we attended the competition in Vedic recitation, when students were examined. At the conclusion of the *sammelan* Sri Jagadguru himself made gifts to the Vedic scholars and students by his lotus hands and blessed them. In addition, thousands of rupees were spent

for the stay and travel expenses of these scholars from all regions of India.

We too, with those who came with us, received gifts and blessings from Shri Acharya.

Such Vedic conferences, we feel strongly, would go a long way in reviving Vedic learning and in enthusing those who take to the study of the Vedas. We had the definite feeling that such conferences, if held frequently, would confer benefit on the whole of humanity.

The first words that flowed out of Sri Jagadguru Acharya Swami's mouth on our greeting him were:

"You live far away from here, from Bharat, from me. So it is natural that *some differences are apparent* between your ways and those of the Vedic descendants of Bharat".

These words of Sri Acharya may appear common to the outside world. But, to us, it was an ablution in the river of Grace. It is beyond the power of words to describe how our heart was immersed in the ocean of joy and burst out in ecstatic dance on hearing these loving words from a loving soul.

Reverence, faith, devotion and love surged in our heart and this upsurge was offered at the lotus feet of the Acharya, whose heart was overflowing with Grace that drenched us completely—all this is even beyond our power to experience. How then to express? Only the divinities that preside over Kamakoti Peetham have the capacity to realise in full what this Grace is. Sri Acharya Swami has attained the very end of Union. He is a Yoga Siddha, verily a God on earth, a like of whom will be rarest among the rares of this Yuga. This is our firm conviction.

I say this because throughout our month-long sojourn in Bharat, we had the intense feeling that Sri Acharya was looking after every little detail of our pilgrimage and was ever by our side.

We had contact with him either directly or indirectly wherever we went—Vijayapuri, Nagarjunasagar Dam and Reservoir, Tirupati, Kancheepuram, Mahabalipuram, Madras, Delhi, Mathura, Agra, Hardwar, Hrishikesh, Lakshmanjula, Lucknow, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Saranath, Gaya, Bodhgaya, Rajagriha, Nalanda and Calcutta. His disciples attended to our comforts in all these places. Under his gracious instruction, an assembly of Pandits greeted us in Madras and Delhi.

With the power of Sri Acharya guarding us constantly, our pilgrimage was thoroughly enjoyable. It would not be out of place if we record here the excellent way in which the Cultural Affairs people arranged for our boarding and lodging throughout.

We were so pressed for time that we had to leave our camp even without taking food on the day we left Delhi. The Railway Department which is doing commendable public service came to know of this somehow and detained the train to suit our convenience. So the Jagadguru's Grace was there with us to give a send-off.

We pray to the Trinity and the divinities of Bharat and her sister countries that Sri Jagadguru Kanchi Kamakoti Peethadhipati lives in this human case in perfect health and energy for long long to come. Sri Jagadguru, though a person of utter renunciation and complete detachment, is deeply attached to—and is the Great Protector of—the Vedic way of life, because it alone makes for the welfare of those who have faith in *Dharma.*

The name of Sri Acharya, his form, his staff of *Sannyasa*, the *paduka* (sandal) of his feet—each and everything that pertains to him, is transfigured beyond the material plane and takes spiritual dimensions. That is why these holy things get implanted in our hearts. Let us pray that they remain as such for ever and for ever.

WHY AM I SO MOVED BY THIS SWAMIJI?

By

H. V. R. IENGAR

A few years ago I went to call on a friend of mine in Delhi, holding one of the highest official positions, and, in the course of conversation, asked about his wife and children. I was not being other than just polite. I did not know his wife particularly well. I knew that she was the daughter of one of the most eminent men in India in the early part of this century, a great barrister who had amassed wealth, and that she had been brought up in a life of luxuy, that she had married a distant cousin who was in the Indian Civil Service and who had a highly successful career. When I first met them, the British Raj was still very powerful and social life in Delhi was built round a mixed crowd of British and Indian members of the services and their families. My friend and his wife circulated constantly in this crowd. He was an epitome of all that was best in Madras and Oxford; and she combined the graces of a cultivated Hindu family with the sophistication derived from frequent travels overseas. They had charming and intelligent children. And everyone would have said, and did say, that they were the luckiest family in Delhi and, indeed, in all India. They had everything to make them happy—wealth, status, good character, charm, and lovely children.

My friend said that his wife had gone to a place near Rishikesh to spend a week in the ashram of a Swami. I was quite astonished. I could not think of her living in a rustic ashram. She had been so accustomed to luxury—and she moved with such ease in the sophisticated circles of Delhi and London that I could not imagine her spending any time—let alone a whole week—in the rather primitive conditions of an ashram. However, I said nothing: it would have been impolite to be curious.

As it happened, sheer chance took me and my wife to the ashram in the course of the week. We were having a holiday with friends and happened to be driving in the vicinity of the ashram, when it occurred to me to visit my friend's wife in the ashram. It also occurred to me that I might as well call on the Swami. I had never called on a Swami before. I am not particularly religious and, if I may add, without being arrogant or sacrilegious, I had no particularly high opinion about Swamis in general.

We dropped in at the ashram during what turned out to be the prayer time. During the prayer I saw my friend's wife sitting in the ashram. I could scarcely recognise her. Gone was the lovely and expensive sari; gone were the jewels; gone was all the sophistication of make-up. She was dressed in a rough homespun sari and she sat completely absorbed during the prayer, with her eyes half-closed. She saw us only after the prayer was over. She then smiled, talked to us briefly, and said she would take us to the Swami.

"Are you surprised?" she asked, "to find me, of all people, here? You have only seen me in cocktail parties and receptions in Delhi. I have to take part in the life of my husband. But I have my own life. He

is so busy with his official work that he has no time even to think of anything else. I have plenty of time. My children are growing up. The Swami has given me eyes to see Reality. I walk through cocktail parties, but they are not Reality." There was a far away look in her eyes—as if she had seen something that was beautiful and shining in the distance. And then she took us inside the ashram and introduced us to the Swami.

He was friendly and gracious. I tried very hard to sense the unusual, the mystic, the pulse of the spiritual, but, try as I might, I could not. There are quite a few men who are friendly and gracious—bankers, merchants, even politicians. But he did not give the feeling, which obviously my friend's wife and several others living in the ashram had—of something other-worldly; something that compelled you to think of Divine Grace.

The Swami was subsequently kind enough to send me several of his books. I tried hard to read them. They did not mean much to me—nothing, in fact. Somehow, we did not seem to be in the same plane of communication. And yet there were others who were—such as my friend's wife. I did not think the fault was the Swami's. I felt it must be mine; there must be something wanting in me which made it impossible for me to offer the quick response for a mystic or a spiritual call.

After this, I met more than one Swami, and in each case the result was disappointingly similar. The conversation was stilted and sterile, and lacked all genuine feeling of communication — other than normal, polite conversation. I became oppressed by the feeling that there must be something wanting in myself. For several other people —and some of them I knew well—had been most genuinely moved and uplifted.

And then, one day, I received a telephone call asking whether I would call on the Sankaracharya of Kamakoti. I was very surprised, for although I had heard a great deal about him, I had made no attempt to contact him. I knew that in his presence and in the presence of any Swami, I would be shy and uneasy. Moreover, I was not aware of what I had done to receive this unusual message. People have waited long periods and gone long distances just to get a glimpse of the Sankaracharya, and, here was I being offered the honour and privilege of calling on him.

At the time I got the message I was on the point of going out of Madras. After I returned I received the message again and this time I was indisposed. A third message came and this time happily I was in a position to accept the kind invitation of the Sankaracharya. But my main impulse was one of curiosity. Why had he sent for me?

As soon as I offered him my respects he said, "I read that article of yours on your mother. I felt I should like to see you."

It was as if a screen was suddenly opened. I had been holding high official positions for many years; I had made speeches and written articles which had acquired for me a certain degree of acclaim. All this had no significance to the Sankaracharya. But he had seen a tribute I had paid to my mother and what evidently attracted him was the evocation of the qualities of my mother which I had emphasized.

What were these qualities? An utter belief in the unseen Power which shapes human destinies, a belief so strong that it could not be shaken by any kind of calamity —a dedication to the ideal of chastity, a dedication so completely instinctive that she was astonished to think that other women did not automatically share it—compassion and utter integrity. I had been asked to write a short piece for the Deepavali Number of a well-known literary magazine and had decided to write a brief reminiscence of my mother. I had drawn a picture of her early life which was one of luxury, of her married life which was one of penury and continuous misery, of her serenity and dignity, come what may, and, till her dying day, of her faith in a divine Dispensation. It was this that attracted the Sankaracharya

Our talk related to the revival of faith in the essentials of Hindu religion. I told him that I was not particularly "religious minded" in the sense that I very rarely went to a temple, that I did not practise rituals, and that I led a somewhat anglicised life. He brushed all this aside. My article on my mother had led him to think that I had got the essentials of the Hindu faith. He pleaded that people like myself--holding good positions, should get together and see that the younger generation particularly

should be taught to respect the essentials of the Hindu faith. He emphasized the need for tolerance and compassion in any programme that may be launched for the purpose.

As I watched his frail and emaciated body, I asked myself, why am I so moved by this Swamiji? It is not just the words, for there are others whose words are equally charged with simplicity and dignity and tolerance. It is not the personality, for I have seen other men whose personality is more impressive. It is not the surroundings, for the surroundings were not impressive. What is this totality of impression and feeling that makes me think that here is a person charged with Divine Grace? I cannot explain this but just feel that it would be good just to sit near him in silence.

It is another story altogether as to why neither I nor any of my friends has done anything yet on the lines indicated by the Sankara Acharya. That is not his fault.

SHRADHHANJALI

By
S. K. Singh

It was a difficult decision whether I should say anything at all on this occasion, and if I do, what should it concern itself with. The relationship between Guru and his disciple is the most intimate in our tradition, and one naturally feels hesitant to open any portion of this solemn privacy to public gaze. There is no counterpart to the institution and office of Guru in the non-Indian approaches to working out a pattern of relationship of the individual soul with the ultimate reality, whatever may be its hypothesized nature. And yet, the occasion had a compulsion of its own—one who received his grace and favour in such abundant measure, must speak. Also, following Pushpadanta,

मम त्वेतां वाणीं गुणकथनपुण्येन भवतः।
पुनामीत्यर्थेऽस्मिन् पुरमथन बुद्धिर्व्यवसिता ॥

I had the good fortune to see Swamijee for the first time towards the end of 1959 when he was sojourning in the outskirts of Madras. The events leading upto the meeting were strangely charged with an inward ferment which appeared to be altogether uncalled for on rational and cool considerations. I remember questioning myself about my mental state. When I look back I can see a gradual but inexorable compulsion to surrender further and yet further. There may be no end to peeling off the innumerable layers of the onion.

An Avatar is usually believed to be a threshold, a meeting point (सन्धिस्थल) where transcending other phenomenal laws, the unmanifested divine spirit makes itself manifest. It is a point where qualitatively different planes of reality coalesce. On the threshold, you are both in and out. What is significant is the simultaneity; at that particular point of intersection, the divine is manifest as well as unmanifest. It springs out of the infinite compassion. In our tradition, the greatest of the Gurus perform precisely this role—out of infinite compassion, a point of intersection is made available for participation to all who care. All that we weak creatures have to do is to walk in.

I remember an illustration given by Ramana Maharshi—what can one do to help a passenger, who while in the train, still insists on carrying his luggage on his head?

तव तत्त्वं न जानामि कीदृशोऽसि महेश्वर।
यादृशोऽसि महादेव तादृशाय नमो नमः ॥

THE MASTER I FOUND

By

ROBERT WALSER

It was in the year 1961 (towards the end of the November) that my meeting with His Holiness took place. I was then on my third visit to India. Twice, previously, I had come to India and had travelled all over the country devoting many months to the quest of a genuine Master of Spiritual Light ... and though I had been able to meet quite a few so-called saints (many of them being famous even in the West) still my heart remained dissatisfied, for they certainly did not measure up to my conception of a real *God-man* I had begun to doubt even the existence of such a God-man in India. But, nevertheless, I decided to embark on a last trial, one last quest.

This time, I did not go about it in the usual way, *viz.*, by asking, enquiring, checking etc., but devoted much of time to silent concentration and praying for Divine Guidance.

I wanted to start my quest from Madras this time. One day, after an hour or so of intense prayer to God (that He may lead my steps in the right direction) I decided to leave my room and to go out for a walk on the beach. As I was passing through the hall of my Hotel I was unexpectedly stopped by a South Indian gentleman who addressed me like this: "The Master you are looking for is not far from here! His name is ......", and it was then that I heard for the first time mentioned the name of His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya! Amazed by this evident "lead"—though still a little sceptical—I decided to follow it. But the nice and helpful gentleman was unfortunately not able to give me the exact whereabouts of the Saint. He just knew he was in some small village in South India, and that was all he could tell me. I left Madras, but it turned out to be quite an elaborate quest. For I got the most contradictory answers to my questions. No two answers were alike, though the people seemed very friendly and eager to volunteer all they knew about the whereabouts of the great man. It was extremely frustrating and irritating! I spent quite some time chasing the elusive and ever-fleeing Saint, until I finally landed in Trichinopoly having almost lost hope of ever finding him, perhaps even doubting the very existence of the man. And then, one late night as I was lying on my bed in one of those rather depressing railway retiring rooms, there was a knock against my door. As I opened, there stood a young taxi-driver. He would take me to Sri Sankaracharya, he said, for he knew exactly where to find him. For some strange reason I trusted the young man and just told him to be ready to leave very early next morning. My trust turned out to be well placed! After only a few hours of driving inland, following a very small and dusty road, we arrived (it was almost one o'clock) at a small temple near a village called Elayattankudi.

The numerous Brahmins present immediately reassured me that I had finally reached the goal of my quest. "I have come a long way to seek His Holiness" said I.

" Yes yes. He is expecting you! " came the incredible answer.

People had warned me that it would be difficult to be received by the Saint, and that even in the event that he would receive me, I'd probably have to wait for a long time! Well, in less than five minutes, I was standing before His Holiness!

I felt immediately that I was standing in the presence of real Greatness. What simplicity, what peace, what silence! A strong wave of veneration welled up from my heart; at last through *GOD's* mercy I had found what I had been looking for all these years! Although Sri Sankaracharya could not possibly have heard of me before or known me in any human way, he nevertheless seemed to know everything about me. It was extraordinary! He did not need to ask me all those questions that I had been accustomed to answer in the presence of all those other so-called saints, such as, "Where are you from? What do you do? Why have you come to India?"—questions that made them appear to me more like curious reporters rather than omniscient saints! Here was a man who could see through me and read my mind like an open book without having to ask one single question ! A wonderful sense of peace descended upon my soul as the great and gentleman proceeded to answer all my conscious and my unconscious questions, without my having to ask them verbally ! A sense of genuine and deep love for this loving man flooded my heart and my feeling of tremendous gratitude as I listened silently to his wonderful words. What a memorable hour this was !

Before I left, he blessed me and asked me to concentrate on him that very evening at 8'o clock, when I would be back in Trichnopoly. Furthermore, I had to promise that before leaving India I would write to him and tell him about my further experiences in India !

That same evening back in Trichy I discovered the real meaning of the word " blessing"! As I was concentrating (as agreed) on His Holiness, I sudden ly felt such a terrific of spiritual strength that it almost overwhelmed me! What a concrete and tangible experience that blessing was !

One should not be astonished at my enthusiasm provoked by the experience of *real* blessing ! Up to that moment in Trichy I had been thinking of a blessing only in terms of the empty, meaningless forceless gestures of Western priesthood and Popery! But this was the revelation that the blessing of a true Saint meant a transmission of tremendous spiritual power, a power as real and tangible as electricity and not just the meaningless sprinkling of water on things, animals and people !

I have not seen the Jagadguru since ; but our spiritual contact has never been interrupted. Sometimes I write and the amazing thing is that his answer invariably strikes at the vital point of each question, leaving me awed at the incredible insight of the Great Master ! So, as you can see, distance is no hindrance to a close spiritual contact......all I have to do is to concentrate ! Let me end this short article by saying once more that it was indeed a blessed day when I met His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya !

WITH THE SPIRITUAL HEAD OF SOUTH INDIA

By

PAUL BRUNTON.

We enter Chingleput* through a palm-fringed high way and find it a tangle of white-washed houses, huddled red roofs and narrow lanes. We get down and walk into the centre of the city, where large crowds are gathered together. We pass through a tiny doorway and enter a bare anteroom. At the far end there is a dimly lit enclosure, where I behold a short figure standing in the shadows. I approach closer to him, put down my little offering and bow low in salutation. There is an artistic value in this ceremony which greatly appeals to me, apart from its necessity as an expression of respect and as a harmless courtesy. I know well that Shri Shankara is no Pope, for there is no such thing in Hinduism, but he is teacher and inspirer of a religious flock of vast dimensions. The whole of South India bows to his tutelage.

I look at him in silence. This short man is clad in the ochre-coloured robe of a monk and leans his weight on a friar's staff. I have been told that he is on the right side of forty, hence I am surprised to find his hair quite grey.

His noble face, pictured in grey and brown, takes an honoured place in the long portrait gallery of my memory. That elusive element which the French aptly term *spirituel* is present in his face. His expression is modest and mild, the large dark eyes being extraordinarily tranquil and beautiful. The nose is short, straight and classically regular. There is a rugged little beard on his chin, and the gravity of his mouth is most noticeable. Such a face might have belonged to one of the saints who graced the Christian Church during the Middle Ages, except that this one possesses the added quality of intellectuality. I suppose we of the practical West would say that he has the eyes of a dreamer. Somehow, I feel in an inexplicable way that there is something more than mere dreams behind those heavy lids.

I shall sweep through the earlier phases of this interview, because they are more concerned with myself than with the Hindu Primate. He asks about my personal experience in the country ; he is very interested in ascertaining the exact impressions which Indian people and institutions make upon a foreigner. I give him my candid impressions, mixing praise and criticism freely and frankly.

The conversation then flows into wider channels and I am much surprised to find that he regularly reads English newspapers, and that he is well informed upon current affairs in the outside world. Indeed, he is not unaware of what the latest noise at Westminster is about, and he knows also through what painful travail the troublous infant of democracy is passing in Europe.

I remember Venkataramani's firm belief that Shri Shankara possesses prophetic insight. It touches my fancy to press for some opinion about the world's future.

" When do you think that the political and economic conditions everywhere will begin to improve ?"

" A change for the better is not easy to come by quickly," he replies. " It is a process which must needs take some time. How can things improve when the nations spend more each year on the weapons of death ? "

" There is nevertheless much talk of disarmament today. Does that count ? "

* January, 1931.

" If you scrap your battleships and let your cannons rust, that will not stop war. People will continue to fight, even if they have to use sticks ! "

" But what can be done to help matters ?"

" Nothing but spiritual understanding between one nation and another, and between rich and poor, will produce goodwill and thus bring real peace and prosperity. "

" That seems far off. Our outlook is hardly cheerful, then ? "

His Holiness rests his arm a little more heavily upon his staff.

"There is still God," he remarks gently.

" If there is, He seems very far away," I boldly protest.

" God has nothing but love towards mankind, " comes the soft answer.

"Judging by the unhappiness and wretchedness which afflict the world today, He has nothing but indifference," I break out impulsively, unable to keep the bitter force of irony out of my voice. He looks at me strangely. Immediately I regret my hasty words.

" The eyes of a patient man see deeper. God will use human instruments to adjust matters at the appointed hour. The turmoil among nations, the moral wickedness among people and the suffering of miserable millions will provoke, as a reaction, some great divinely inspired man to come to the rescue. In this sense, every century has its own saviour. The process works like a law of physics. The greater the wretchedness caused by spiritual ignorance and materialism, the greater will be the man who will arise to help the world. "

" Then do you expect some one to arise in our time, too ? "

" In our century, " he corrects. " Assuredly. The need of the world is so great and its spiritual darkness is so thick that an inspired man of God will surely arise. "

" Is it your opinion, then, that men are becoming more degraded ?" I query.

" No, I do not think so," he replied tolerantly. " There is an indwelling divine soul in man which, in the end, must bring him back to God. "

"But there are ruffians in our Western cities who behave as though there were indwelling demons in them," I counter, thinking of the modern gangster.

" Do not blame people so much as the environments into which they are born. Their surroundings and circumstances force them to become worse than they really are. That is true of both the East and West. Society must be brought into tune with a higher note. Materialism must be balanced by idealism ; there is no other real cure for the world's difficulties. The troubles into which countries are everywhere being plunged are really the agonies which will force this change, just as failure is frequently a sign-post pointing to another road. "

" You would like people to introduce spiritual principles into their worldly dealings, then ?"

" Quite so. It is not impracticable, because it is the only way to bring about results which will satisfy everyone in the end, and which will not speedily disappear. And if there were more men who had found spiritual light in the world, it would spread more quickly. India, to its honour, supports and respects its spiritual men though less so than in former times. If all the world were to do the same and to take its guidance from men of spiritual vision, then all the world would soon find peace and grow prosperous."

Our conversation trails on. I am quick to notice that Shri Shankara does not decry the West in order to exalt the East, as so many in his land do. He admits that each half of the world possesses its own set of virtues and vices, and that in this way they are roughly equal ! He hopes that a wiser generation will fuse the best points of Asiatic and European civilizations into a higher and balanced social scheme.

I drop the subject and ask permission for some personal questions. It is granted without difficulty.

" How long has your Holiness held this title ? "

" Since 1907. At that time I was only twelve years old. Four years after my appointment I retired to a village on the banks of the Cauvery, where I gave myself up to meditation and study for three years. Then only did my public work begin".

" I would like to meet someone who has high attainments in Yoga and can give some sort of proof or demonstration of them. There are many of your holy men who can only give one more talk when they are asked for this proof. Am I asking too much ?"

The tranquil eyes meet mine.

There is a pause for a whole minute. His Holiness fingers his beard.

" If you are seeking initiation into real Yoga of the higher kind, then you are not

seeking too much. Your earnestness will help you, while I can perceive the strength of your determination ; but a light is beginning to awaken within you which will guide you to what you want, without doubt. "

I am not sure whether I correctly understood him.

" So far I have depended on myself for guidance. Even some of your ancient sages say that there is no other god than that which is within ourselves, " I hazard.

And the answer swiftly comes :

"God is everywhere. How can one limit Him to one's own self ? He supports the entire Universe. "

I feel that I am getting out of my depth and immediately turn the talk away from this semi-theological strain.

" What is the most practical course for me to take ?"

" Go on with your travels. When you have finished them, think of the various Yogis and holy men you have met ; then pick out the one who makes most appeal to you. Return to him, and he will surely bestow his initiation upon you. "

I look at his calm profile and admire its singular serenity.

" But suppose, your Holiness, that none of them makes sufficient appeal to me. What then ? "

" In that case you will have to go on alone until God Himself initiates you. Practise meditation regularly; contemplate the higher things with love in your heart ; think often of the soul and that will help to bring you to it. The best time to practise is the hour of waking ; the next best time is the hour of twilight. The world is calmer at those times and will disturb your meditations less. "

He gazes benevolently at me. I begin to envy the saintly peace which dwells on his bearded face. Surely, his heart has never known the devastating upheavals which have scarred mine. I am stirred to ask him impulsively :

" If I fail, may I then turn to you for assistance ? "

Shri Shankara gently shakes his head.

" I am at the head of a public institution, a man whose time no longer belongs to himself. My activities demand almost all my time. For years I have spent only three hours in sleep each night. How can I take personal pupils ? You must find a master who devotes his time to them. "

" But I am told that real masters are rare, and that a European is unlikely to find them."

He nods his assent to my statement, but adds :

" Truth exists. It can be found. "

" Can you not direct me to such a master, one who you know is competent to give me proofs of the reality of higher Yoga ? "

His Holiness does not reply till after an interval of protracted silence.

" Yes. I know of only two masters in India who could give you what you wish. One of them lives in Benares, hidden away in a large house, which is itself hidden among spacious grounds. Few people are permitted to obtain access to him ; certainly, no European has yet been able to intrude upon his seclusion. I could send you to him, but I fear that he may refuse to admit a European."

"And the other— ?" My interest is strangely stirred.

" The other man lives in the interior, farther south. I know him to be a high master. I recommend that you go to him. "

" Who is he ?"

" He is called the Maharishee*. His abode is on Arunachala, the Mountain of the Holy Beacon, which is in the territory of North Arcot. Shall I provide you with full instructions, so that you may discover him ?"

A picture flashes suddenly before my mind's eye.

I see the yellow robed friar, who has vainly persuaded me to accompany him to his teacher. I hear him murmuring the name of a hill. It is : " The Hill of the Holy Beacon. "

" Many thanks, your Holiness, " I rejoin, " but I have a guide who comes from the place. "

" Then you will go there ?"

I hesitate.

" All arrangements have been made for my departure from the South tomorrow, " I mutter uncertainly.

" In that case I have a request to make."

" With pleasure. "

" Promise me that you will not leave South India before you have met the Maharishee."

I read in his eyes a sincere desire to help me. The promise is given.

A benignant smile crosses his face.

" Do not be anxious. You shall discover that which you seek. "

* Shri Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai.

A murmer from the crowd which is in the street penetrates the house.

"I have taken up too much of your valuable time" I apologize. "I am indeed sorry."

Shri Shankara's grave mouth relaxes. He follows me into the ante-room and whispers something into the ear of my companion. I catch my name in the sentence.

At the door I turn to bow in farewell salutation. His Holiness calls me back to receive a parting message :

"You shall always remember me, and I shall always remember you!"

And so, hearing these cryptic and puzzling words, I reluctantly withdraw from this interesting man, whose entire life has been dedicated to God from childhood. He is a pontiff who cares not for wordly power, because he has renounced all and resigned all. Whatever material things are given to him, he at once gives again to those who need them. His beautiful and gentle personality will surely linger in my memory....

It is nearly midnight when I return home. I take a last glimpse overhead. The stars stud the vast dome of the sky in countless myriads. Nowhere in Europe can one see them in such overwhelming numbers. I run up the steps leading to the verandah flashing my pocket torch. Out of the darkness a crouching figure rises and greets me. "Subramanya" I exclaim startled : "What are you doing here ?" The ochre robed Yogi indulges in one of his tremendous grins.

"Did I not promise to visit you, Sir ?" He reminds reproachfully.

Of course !

In the large room I fire a question at him. "Your master—is he called the Maharishee ?"

It is now his turn to draw back astonished.

"How do you know, Sir ? Where could you have learnt this ?"

"Never mind. Tomorrow we both start for his place. I shall change the plans."

"This is joyful news, sir."

"But I shall not stay there for long though. A few days, may be."

I fling a few more questions at him during the next half hour and then thoroughly tired, go to bed. Subramanya is quite content to sleep on a piece of palm matting which lies on the floor. He wraps himself up in a thin cloth which serves at once as a mattress sheet and blanket and disdains offer of more comfortable bedding.

The next thing of which I am aware is suddenly awakening. The room is totally dark. I feel my nerves strangely tense. The atmosphere around seems like electrified air. I pull my watch from under the pillow and by the glow of its radium-lit dial discover the time to be a quarter to three. It is then that I become conscious of some bright object at the foot of the bed. I immediately sit up and look straight at it.

My astounded gaze meets the face and form of His Holiness Shri Shankara. It is clearly and unmistakably visible. He does not appear to be some ethereal ghost but rather a solid human being. There is a mysterious luminosity around the figure which separates it from the surrounding darkness.

Surely the vision is an impossible one ! Have I not left him at Chingleput ? I close my eyes tightly in an effort to test the matter. There is no difference and I still see him quite plainly.

Let it suffice that I receive the sense of a benign and friendly presence. I open my eyes and regard the kindly figure in the loose yellow robe.

The face alters, for the lips smile and seem to say : "Be humble and then you shall find what you seek." Why do I feel that a living human being is thus addressing me ? Why do I not regard it as a ghost at least ? The vision disappears as mysteriously as it has come. It leaves me exalted, happy and unperturbed by its supernormal nature. Shall I dismiss it as a dream ? What matters it ?

There is no more sleep for me this night. I lie awake pondering over the day's meeting, over the memorable interview with His Holiness Shri Shankara, the Heirarch of God to the simple people of South India.*

**From a Search in Secret India.*

EVENING WITH A SAGE

*A Reminiscence**

By

ARTHUR ISENBERG.

The person who sat opposite me was sixty-five years old, slim, a bit on the smallish side. The top of his head was almost entirely bald or shaven, the lower portion of his face was outlined by a short white beard. He had a white moustache and white eyebrows. His body was clothed in the saffron coloured mantle of the sannyasin.

Not that any of this mattered. What did matter was his face, and more particularly, his eyes, which looked at me with a mixture, or rather a fine blending, of intelligence, kindliness and compassion, while at the same time somehow reflecting a most gentle sense of humour.

I had the definite sensation of being in the presence of a man thoroughly at peace with himself, a sage. This impression grew to conviction during the course of the three and a half hour conversation that night on 20th April, 1959.

The sage is His Holiness, Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Sri Pada, the present Sankaracharya or spiritual head of the Math in Conjeeveram, South India, the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

The physical setting may have played a part in shaping my impression. There was the magic of the South Indian night in early summer ; the light of the full moon silhouetting a variety of palm trees ; the silent flight of bats and flying foxes ; occasional gentle cool breezes ; now and then the sounds of little screech owls ; or the distant barking of a dog or jackal.

The Acharya (Preceptor) and I sat cross-legged in a little grove of a garden in Numbal, a small village some half a dozen miles from Madras.....

Almost from the start I was impressed by a most remarkable habit which the Acharya practises. Not only does he never interrupt a question (which would be remarkable enough!) but he invariably pauses about a minute or more before answering. His reply, when it comes, clearly shows that it was preceded by reflection : it is invariably concise and to the point.

Many of the questions discussed by the Acharya and myself were of purely personal interest, but there were others of a more general scope.

I asked the Acharya what, in his opinion, would be the most significant aid which a foreign government or institution, sincerely interested in helping India, could provide for the country. As usual, he thought for about a minute before replying, substantially as follows :

" The answer to your question depends of course on whom you address it to. If you were to ask the Indian Government, they would probably say that help was most urgently needed in the field of agriculture

* *Of a meeting on* 20-4-1959 *at Numbal, near Madras.*

or education. But since you are asking me, I must give you my answer.

" As I see it, the most significant help which a foreign government oı institution could render India would be in the cultural field. To help us deepen our understanding and appreciation of our own cultural heritage in all its forms—literature, dance, arts, philosophy—to help us carry on research in these fields and to bring the knowledge of these matters to our people—that would be rendering truly significant help."

The views expressed by the Acharya on the subject of the proper role of Indian women, were conservative in the extreme. While I do not share his views, I respect the reasons which prompt him to hold them............

I had prepared only one question deliberately in anticipation of the interview. His reply to that question showed that the Acharya was by no means without a very fine sense of humour.

My question : " It has been said that the real beginning of wisdom consists of knowing the right question to ask. Suppose then that I were wise : what question should I ask you ?"

He had begun to smile even as I was asking my question ; nevertheless, he listened carefully to Dr. Raghavan's translation, even asked him to repeat it. There ensued the customary one-minute pause for reflection. Then came his answer : ' If you were wise, you would not ask any question.' It was my turn to smile, appreciatively. Then I said : " True enough. But suppose that I were just a novice, at the beginning stage of the quest for wisdom. What question ought I to ask you then ?"

" In that case you might ask me what you ought to do."

" All-right. Your Holiness, please consider youself asked."

His answer, when it came, was, perhaps, a bit anticlimatic : he told me to continue along the line I was already following.

I warned him that, for better or worse, such was my nature and bent, that I could only follow an intellectual path, that the world of faith was pretty much a closed book to me. He declared that the path of reason was ultimately not only the best, but indeed the only one, that all other ways—faith, devotion or whatever—where of value only as preliminaries, preparations, interim stages, meaning nothing unless superseded by understanding.

" But, " I queried, "isn't there such a thing as pride or arrogance of the intellect ?"

" Yes," he replied, " but what makes you ask that question if not your intellect which is its own observer, critic, watchman."

" How, " I asked, " can one know whether one is making progress, stagnating or retrogressing in the quest for wisdom ?"

He replied : " If each year, the number of things or events, which can arouse your anger or lust grows smaller, you are making progress ; if it remains the same, you are stagnating ; if it increases, your spiritual development is retrogressive."

I enquired whether there was any consolation or joy, any true happiness to be found. He answered that there was consolation and joy in the quest itself. In reply to a further question, he amended his answer by stating that ultimate, non-derivative existence was in itself blissful.

Our conversation covered many other topics. His Holiness evinced particular interest in certain implications of theoretical physics which, to put it negatively and rather cautiously, do not clash with the thorough monism of Advaita Vedanta. (He has repeatedly written and spoken about the relation of modern science and Advaita).

It is my cherished hope to be able to avail myself of his kind invitation to meet the Sankaracharya again. Meanwhile, there remains the vivid momory of my privileged meeting on that peaceful evening with one of the most truly remarkable persons of our troubled age : the gentle sage of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

SANKARACHARYA

By

MILTON SINGER.

When I was in Madras in the winter of 1954-55 I heard references on a number of occasions to Swami Shankaracharya which greatly aroused my curiosity. Some of these references were made by avowed followers of the Swami, others by his critics, but all singled him out as a person of unusual position and attainments. (My) interviews (with him) were among the highlights of my visit to India and still stand out with great vividness.

For an American, the setting of the meetings under a green tree in the garden of the Conjeevaram Mutt was in itself most charming and, I may say, misleading since I did not at the first interview recognize the Swami sitting under the tree until my companions had prostrated themselves before him. But the most memorable part of these interviews was the Swami himself. On both occasions he showed a very lively curiosity about the outside world and asked me about where I had been, whom and what I had seen, what foreign languages I knew, and similar questions. He also showed a very strong interest in the American Indians, their history, diet and customs. In these questions, and more so in his answers to my questions about Hinduism, the Swami showed a most unusually clear and candid mind. From him I believe I learned more about the essential foundations of orthodox Hinduism than I had learned from a two-years' previous study of the subject. In fact, this holy man had a view of the foundations which would be more congenial to an anthropologist than to the Western student of religion and theology. For, according to the Swami, the distinctiveness of Hinduism does not rest in its philosophy, ethics, or theology, things which tend to be common to all schools and all religions. Hinduism adds to these a hereditary discipline based on family and caste, and the growth or decline of Hinduism is directly dependent on the social disciplines. The Swami referred to these social disciplines as the ' Sociological foundations ' of Hinduism. While he showed considerable concern about the recent weakening of these disciplines, he nevertheless felt that there was a good prospect for activating the religious non-Brahmins to maintain them along with the Brahmins.

This way of looking at Hinduism brings together in a very illuminating manner many apparently disparate things that I had seen in India and gave me a most intimate insight into Hindu institutions and ideas.

The Swami's intense seriousness and active concern for the future of Hinduism was refreshingly mixed with a wry humour and detachment. At one point in our conversation when I asked him about the obligation of people to see him regularly at the Mutt, he said that the allegiance to a Sankara Mutt is not specific and definite as in the case of some other Mutts and wistfully remarked that there are some people who never come to see him. At another point, in talking about the Dravidian movement, he suggested that my study of South Indian culture would be incomplete if I did not interview at least one of the leaders of this movement.

Before I went to India I had heard and read much about the great ' soul force ' of its holy men and saints but I had assumed that this was something in the ancient past. And it was not until I had met Shankaracharya that I realised it was still a part of the living force of Hinduism today.

FROM BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

Dr. S. I. Tulaev, Russian Indologist of distinction was visibly moved when he met His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha on 24-2-1965 near Sunkuvar Chatram about forty miles from Madras.

His Holiness at the first instance made kind enquiries about Dr. Tulaev's studies.

Dr. Tulaev: Sir, I am very much thankful to Your Holiness for having kindly given me the audience. I will not take much of Your Holiness's time, I shall ask you only two questions. Sir, could you kindly oblige me. The first is this: A man has no belief in religion. He does not adopt any rituals. Never goes to the temple or church and does not heed to any dogmas. But he always thinks good and does good throughout his life. Could you kindly tell me, Sir, whether such a man has any salvation at the end of his life?

His Holiness closed his eyes and was in meditation for a few seconds; these few seconds, the whole surrounding was absolutely calm, divinely calm. After the divinely pause, His Holiness replies 'Yes'.

At this answer, Dr. Tulaev was overwhelmed with joy, a joy that he never experienced in life and for which his heart was longing all these years. He looked as if he has attained the unattainable. He whispered, 'I thank you Sir, I thank you Sir, I thank you. I am satisfied.'

His Holiness: (Enlarging His answer) Do not think that I am giving you this answer after seeing the modern standards of life. No. This is said in our ancient scriptures themselves. There are many aspirants. The Agnostics, those who enquire into the nature of God and by using their own brain, come to the conclusion that there is no God. Secondly, there are the Buddhists, especially the Sunyavadins, who believe in non-existence. Thirdly, the Jains, who believe in suffering by putting their body to various austerities *vratas*, Fourthly, Saivaites, Vaishnavites and others who believe in a personal God and spend their life in devotion; and lastly, the Advaitins who believe the entire world, the Cosmic Reality, is the apparent manifestation of one and the same ultimate Reality. All these aspirants are near the truth. The difference between them lie in their proximity to God. Step by step these five aspirants are nearer the Reality. If one enquired into the nature of God by using his own mind, whatever be the conclusion arrived at, even if it is a total rejection of God-hood, such an aspirant is far higher than the idler who never worries about the search after truth. This is not my saying but is said in our scriptures.

Dr. Tulaev, who was very much satisfied with this answer, asked the second question.

Dr. Tulaev: Sir, I am able to understand Visishtadvaita to a certain extent. In Advaita I am puzzled by the word

'Maya'. 'Maya' you say is nothing. It does not exist. Then why call it Maya?

His Holiness: Visishta-advaitins are also a particular type of Advaitins. They are qualified monists. They consider Maya as the body of God or Brahman. We (Advaitins) believe that Maya is the apparent manifestation of the Reality. I shall give you an example. One makes toys in the form of vegetables out of sugar and gives them appropriate colours. A child who sees them thinks that they are real vegetables. This knowledge is not the real knowledge. When the child grows old, he realises that they are all sugar and the forms are only apparent.

In this a knowledge that was not real did exist and on realisation of the real knowledge, the previous one disappears. In the same way, a rope is mistaken for a snake in dim light. It creates all the effects in spite of being unreal, but when the real knowledge is gained, the earlier one vanishes. Similar to this is Maya. The supreme Brahman is real. The Universe with its varied forms is nothing but Brahman. Yet we see the reality in its manifold forms. The thing that presents this varied manifestation is Maya. When the real knowledge is attained this manifold manifestation disappears as in the case of *Brahmajnanins*. You can neither say that Maya exists nor that it does not exist. You may equate it with zero. Zero has neither value nor is it devoid of value. If you write simple '0', it has no value. If you add any other numeral before, it gains value. Maya is something like that.

Dr. Tulaev was struck with the answer; he was seen repeating—"like zero", "now I understand", "like zero".

The Acharya was seen smiling at this.

Dr. Tulaev: I am completely satisfied, Sir. Now I understand Advaita. I am very much thankful to you, Sir.

Dr. Tulaev was hesitating to ask further. He asked for His Holiness's permission for taking a photograph of His Holiness. His Holiness smilingly granted the request. Since His Holiness was standing in the shade, Dr. Tulaev was still hesitant, because of insufficient light. In a fraction of a second, the great Acharya realising the predicament of this new devotee, moved to sunlight, whereupon he quickly took a snap. His Holiness blessed the Russian with an apple.

On his way back Dr. Tulaev remarked: Here is the true Indian sage who is living a simple life, in the midst of such tiny villages, with people in such villages carrying the highest philosophy. It is only such sages who bless you with the answers you seek in a few seconds. I consider this a fortunate day in my life. I am happy that I have been able to meet him.

JNANA YOGI WITH BHAKTI

By

ARTHUR KOESTLER.

We entered a small and dilapidated house next to a temple.* Facing us there was a dark, narrow corridor, blocked by an ancient palanquin painted white, with long, hard-wood poles sticking out front and back. A small room, rather like a police cell, opened from the corridor, and there we squatted down on a mat in the company of several others. After a few minutes of whispered conversation, a young man approached the palanquin, bent over it and murmured some words. A brown rug inside the palanquin, covering what looked like a shapeless bundle, began slowly to heave and stir, and finally His Holiness scrambled out of it, wrapping the blanket round his head and bare torse in the process of emerging. Tall and lean, but not emacitated, he looked dazed as he squeezed past the palanquin in the corridor and entered the little cell. He sat down cross-legged, facing me on the mat, while the others moved out into the corridor, leaning in through the open door to hear better.

His Holiness remained silent for about half a minute, and I had time to study his remarkable face. Its features had been reduced to bare essentials by hard spiritual discipline. It was dominated by the high, smooth, domed forehead under the short-cropped, white hair. The brown eyes were set so deep that they seemed to be peering out from inside the skull, with soft dark shadows underneath. His firm, curved lips, framed by a trimmed white beard, where surprisingly mobile and expressive as they carefully formed each word. He was emerging from sleep or trance, his eyes only focussing on those present. I was told that he managed an average of three hours' sleep a day, in short fits between duties and observances, always huddled in the palanquin ; and that the devotees were often unable to tell whether he was asleep or in samadhi. He asked me gently why I had come to India :

" Is it merely to observe the country and the people, or is it to guide them in some healthy manner ?"

This was an allusion to certain Press comments, concerned with earlier books. I answered that I had come to see and learn, and with no other purpose.

H. H. : " One's passive interest, too, exert an influence. Even without any specific activity, the angle from which you approach a problem or country produces a *shakti*—an active force."

I said that I was sorry this should be so, but nobody could avoid throwing a shadow.

The Sankaracharya answered : " But one's sincere sympathy throws its own radiance "; and as he said that, a smile transformed his face into that of a child. I had never seen a comparable smile or expression ; it had an extraordinary charm and sweetness. Later, on my way back, I wondered why in Western paintings of saints entranced, blessed or martyred, I had never encountered anything like that enchanted smile. Since all mystics agree that their experience cannot be put into words, perhaps their expression also eludes representation by chisel and brush. However much I admired a Last Supper or a scene from Calvary, I have never felt that

* January 10, 1959, at the Acharya's camp in west Mambalam, Madras,

Jesus of Nazareth really looked like that. On the other hand, certain sculptures of the Gupta period and of the early Indian Baroque do convey an idea of that peculiar smile.

My first question was whether His Holiness thought that it was necessary to adapt the doctrines and observances of Hinduism to the changing social structure of India.

The Sankaracharya's answer, according to the stenographic transcript (which I have slightly compressed) was as follows :

"The present is not the only time when there has been a social revolution. Changes have been taking place even in the remote past, when revolutions were not so violent as they are now. But there are certain fundamentals which have been kept intact. We compare the impact of a social change to a storm. It is necessary to stand firm by the fundamental values and to keep affirming them. We may note the deterioration in moral values and standard. When Alexander came to India, Greek observers wrote that there were no thefts in this country. They cannot say that this standard has been kept up in subsequent times. But we cannot say either that because the situation with regard to morality has changed, teachers should adapt themselves to present-day standards. In the same way, adaptations have no place in the standards of spiritual discipline."

Question : "Is there not a difference between spiritual values and religious observances ? Assuming a person is working in a factory or office, he has to be at his working place at 9 A.M. To perform his religious observances he must start at five in the morning.* Would it not be possible to shorten the prescribed ritual?"

H. H. : "If a man cannot perform his prayers, rites and observances in the prescribed way, he must feel regret and penitence. He can do penance and still perform his duties in the proper way on holidays or at other times of the day when he is less busy. Once concessions are made in the way of shortening observances, there is no limit, and this will lead to their gradual dwindling and extinction."

Question : "If the full discharge of the rites is, in modern society, beyond the average person's capacity, may it not be harmful to make him feel constantly guilty and aware of his failings?"

H.H. : "If a person feels sincere repentance, that sincerity has its own value."

In view of his unyielding attitude, I changed the subject .... I turned to a subject on which he was an unquestioned authority.

Question : " I had several talks with Hindu psychiatrists in Bombay. They all agreed that spiritual exercises greatly help to effect medical cures. What bothered them was the absence of criteria to distinguish between insights gained in mystic trance on the one hand, and hallucinations on the other."

His answer was short and precise : "The state of hallucination is a temporary one. A person should learn to control his mind. What comes after such mental discipline is mystic experience. What appears in the uncontrolled state of mind are hallucinations. These are caused by the wishes and fears of the ego. The mystic's mind is a blank, his experience is shapeless and without object."

Question : "Can a mystic experience be artificially induced by means of drugs?"

H.H. : "You ask this because you think of the experiments of Aldous Huxley."

A.K. : " No, I was thinking of bhang."

H.H. : "Bhang is used among the people in some parts of India to induce certain states of mind. It is not a habit in the South. Such an artificially induced state does not last long. The real mystic condition is more permanent."

Question : "How is an outside observer to distinguish between the genuine and the not-so-genuine?"

H.H. : "Of course, sometimes people mistake a pseudo-Yogi for a real one. But the behaviour of the man who has disciplined his mind, who is a true Yogi, will be different. When you look at him you will see that his face is serene and at peace. That will discover and differentiate him."

He spoke without a trace of self-consciousness ; it evidently did not occur to him that the description applied to himself.

I felt that my time was up, though the Sankaracharya denied with great gentleness that he was tired ; in India, it is the visitor who is supposed to bring the audience to an end, which sometimes leads to embarrassing situations. I embarked on an anecdote—about the Jesuit priest who was asked how he would reconcile God's all-embracing love

* The arthodox Hindu purification rites, prayers and observances require several hours a day.

with the idea of eternal Hell, and who answered : ' Yes, Hell does exist, but it is always empty.'

I suppose my motive in telling the story was to make him smile again. He did, then said, still smiling : ' We have no eternal Hell in Hinduism ; even a little practice of dharma will go a long way in accumulating merit.' He quoted a line from the Gita in Sanskrit.

This was the end of the conversation. I found at last the courage to get up first, and the Sankaracharya, after a very gentle and unceremonious salute, quickly took the few steps to the palanquin and vanished into its interior. The room was suddenly dingy and empty, and I had a feeling of a personal loss.

Such were the views of an orthodox religious leader in contemporary India. The remarkable thing about them is that they bore no relation to contemporaneity. Equally striking was the contrast between his gentle, saintly personality, lovable and loving, peaceful and peace-giving, immersed in contemplation ' without shape or object '—and the rigidity of his views on Hindu doctrine and religious observances. If one tried to project him on to the European scene, one would have to go back several centuries to find a Christian mystic of equal depth and stature ; yet in his views on religious practice he compared with the rigid ecclesiastics of the nineteenth century.

Indians call the Sankaracharya a Jnana Yogi with a strong inclination toward bhakti—Union through devotional worship.*

* From *The lotus and the robot.*

SRI KAMAKOTI PITHA OF SRI SANKARACHARYA

By
N. RAMESAN

Kanchi, the famous city of temples, known from times immemorial as one of the seven Mokshapuris[1] of India, is intimately connected with the life and works of the great Advaitic teacher Sri Sankara. Almost all the works which deal with the life and doings of Sri Sankara, called *Sankara Vijayas*, refer to Sri Sankara's consecrating Sri Kamakshi and Srichakra in Kanchipuram. Thus, the *Madhaviya Sankara Vijaya* in chapter 15 says that Sri Sankara reached Kanchi after worshipping Ramanatha at Ramesvaram. The Anandagiri *Sankara-vijaya*, which is recognised by orientalists as the authentic biography of Sri Sankara, refers to Sankara's visit to Kanchipuram, the establishment of his Matha there, his giving the Yogalinga to Sri Suresvara as well as his *siddhi* at Kanchi itself. The *Chidvilasiya Sankara Vijaya* says that Sri Sankara visited Kanchi and himself drew and consecreted the Srichakra with his own hand in the temple and ascended the *sarvajnapitha*[2] at Kanchi after satisfying the various opponents. These traditions have continued in other works like the *Patanjali charita* by Ramabhadra and the *Sankarabhyudaya* by Rajachudamani Dikshita. The great Ithihasa *Sivarahasya* in the chapter dealing with the life of Sri Sankara refers to Kanchi as Sankara's final place of resort. These literary evidences tend to prove that Sri Sankara established his monastery at Kanchipuram, ascended the *Sarvajnapitha* there and also attained his *siddhi* there. This Matha of Sankara which has been adorned in a continuous line by the great Acharyas of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha is still serving as a beacon light for the spiritual guidance of all devotees who turn to it with devotion and sincerity.

Kanchipuram which is thus the seat of the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha from times immemorial, is also well known to us from other sources. Literary references to Kanchi can be traced back to the centuries before Christ. the earliest being that made by Patanjali (*C.* 150 B.C.) in his *Mahabhashya.* The Chinese records mention about an embassy sent from China to Kanchi (Houang-Techi) in the 2nd century B.C. The Sangam age literature of the Tamils which also belongs to the same period furnishes us glimpses of the city of Kanchi or Kacchi. Tradition has it that Karikala Chola, one of the illustrious rulers of Sangam period, enlarged and beautified this town. Tondaiman Ilandiraiyan[3], the famous contemporary of Karikala,

1. Cities that confer Liberation.
2. Seat of Omniscience.
3. Mediaeval Telugu Chola records are all unanimous about Karikala ruling from Kanchi while the Tiruvalangadu plates of Rajendra Chola I say that Karikala renovated and beatufied its structures with gold.

who was also a poet of repute is credited with the excavation of a big tank at Tenneri or Tinyaneri which is about 14 miles to the north-east of Kanchi[4]. The *Perumpanatruppadai* of Rudran Kannanar describes Kanchi as a well planned and strongly fortified city with high ramparts, King's palaces, broad streets, busy bazaars, and numerous public buildings built of burnt brick. A strong and invincible army always guarded the palace in which Ilandiraiyan the King lived. Festivals were celebrated with much pomp when large numbers of people flocked at the city and worshipped at the temples. A temple of the God " who sleeps on a serpent couch " is specially mentioned by the author[5] Manimekhalai, a Buddhist epic written by a Sattanar of Madurai, a Kulavanigan or grain merchant, gives us a graphic description of Kanchi, in the post-Sangam period (c. 5th Century A.D.). The city was said to be then afflicted by a famine and Manimekhalai went to the town to offer relief to the affected.[6] She is said to have visited the Buddhist Chaitya built by Ilankilli, the brother of Chola Tondukalarkilli, and stayed in the " Dharmadavana arama " located in the south-west of the city.

The history of the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha is closely connected with the history of Kanchipuram itself since the Pitha was established there from the times of Sri Sankara. Apart from the literary evidences quoted above, the Matha itself is preserving a good number of copper-plate inscriptions which give us considerable insight into the antiquity of the Matha in historical times. The evidence of these copper plate grants is also supported by stone epigraphs which we find in places like Kanchipuram, Ambi, etc. These are further supplemented by the evidence of contemporary records of the past 200 or 250 years in several archives like the Sarasvati Mahal Library, the Madras Central Record Office, etc. The most ancient of all the copper-plate epigraphs of the Kamakoti Pitha is that of the Telugu Chola King, Sri Vijaya Ganda Gopala. The grant purports to record the grant of the village Ambikapuram by Sri Vijaya Ganda Gopala to Sri Sankararya Guru of the Matha situated to the west of Sri Hastisailanatha for the purpose of feeding 108 Brahmins every day. The details of the date of the grant are given, as cyclic year Khara, the Sun being in Karkataka Rasi, the tithi being Dasami of Sukla Paksha Anuradha Nakshatra, and the week day being Monday. This has been edited by me elsewhere and on the basis of the astronomical evidence given above, it has been shown that the date of the grant corresponds only to 17th July 1111 A.D. The boundaries of the village Ambikapuram which was then granted are given in the grant as Gridhrapura to the west, Kanchipuram to the east, Kaidaduppur to the south, and Sirnanni to the north. The village is said to be situated to the north of the river Vegavati. These villages are still existing near Kanchipuram. Ambikapuram is known today as Ambi and to its south is a village Kadirpur which can be identified with Kaidaduppur, to the north is a village Sirunai which can be identified with the village Sirnanni. This is the earliest copper-plate grant of the Matha and it belongs to the 12th century A.D.

This grant is also referred to in another stone epigraph on one of the walls of the temple in Ambi. It is of the time of Sri Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagara empire and signed by Chandrasekhara Sarasvati. This epigraph is of Saka year 1436 (or 1514 A.D.), in the cyclic year Bhava, 13th tithi of Adi month. This epigraph has also been edited by me elsewhere. In this, the village Ambi is referred to as 'Nammudaiya Madappuram Ambi.' The word 'Madappuram' refers to villages given as grants to Mathas only. Hence this stone epigraph also gives collateral evidence that the village Ambi granted in the 12th century A.D. continued to be in the possession of the Matha till the 16th century A.D., since it is referred to as Madappuram in one of the stone epigraphs of the village itself. It is pertinent to note that the Matha owns Inam lands in the village Ambi even now. This clearly shows the authenticity of the grant and the fact that the village has been in possession of the Matha for nearly 800 years ever since it was granted by Sri Vijaya Ganda Gopala Deva in the 12th century A.D.

4. Kadiyalur Rudran Kannanar *Pattupattu*.

5. The temple is at present identified by some with Yathoktakari temple in the suburbs of Tiruvehka and if it is so, this is perhaps the earliest reference to Vishnu as an Anantasayi in the Tamil literature.

6. The ruling king is said to have welcomed her and constructed at her request a Pitha for Budha and shrines for the Goddesses Dipatilakai and Manimekhalai.

There are several copper-plate grants in possession of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha which gives us an insight into the influence of the Matha over the religious and spiritual life of the people during the course of the centuries. Some important ones are given here.

(1) In 1507 A.D. or Saka 1429, Sri Viranarasimha Deva Maharaja, the elder brother of the famous Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagara empire, had granted to Sri Mahadeva Sarasvati, the disciple of Sri Sadasiva Sarasvati a village called Kundiyantandalam in the Valakuru Sima of the Padaividu Rajya. A hamlet Suruttial which lies on the border of Kundiyantandalam is referred to as Sankaracharyapuram in an inscription in the Varadarajasvami temple at Kanchipuram[7].

(2) Sri Vijayaranga Chokkanatha, the Nayak King of Madura granted in 1708 A.D. cyclic year Vikriti, some land situated in a number of places on the banks of the Akhanda Kaveri and Coleroon at the instance of the Swami of the Sarada Matha for the maintenance of the feeding of Brahmins in the Matha at Gajaranya Kshetra (Tiruvanaikoil) in the island of Srirangam.

(3) The last grant is an exceedingly interesting one made by the Qutub Shahi Muslim King. Tana Shah, issued on the first day of the month of Shavval of Hijr year 1088. The day of the grant is found to correspond to 17th November 1677 A.D. The grant is in Telugu letters. Half of it is in Persian and the other half in Sanskrit language. A perusal of the other Firmans of the Qutub Shahi King, Tana Shah available in the Central Record Office, Hyderabad shows that this method of using local scripts and several languages was quite common with this king. Tana Singh was a remarkably broadminded ruler and the fact that he made a grant to the Acharya of the Sri Kamakoti Pitha proves the influence and the high esteem in which the Matha was held by even kings of an alien faith in those days.

Coming now to the past 200 or 250 years, we have a wealth of details about the Matha and its history, preserved in the Modi records of the Madras Central Records Office, the Saraswati Mahal Library and the archives of the Matha itself. Tradition has that during the Carnatic wars, on account of disturbed conditions, the Matha was transferred from Kanchipuram to Tanjavur and then later from Tanjavur to Kumbakonam. The Mackenzie Manuscripts throw light as regards the inscriptions relating to Sri Kamakoti Matha.

The portion relating to Sri Sankaracharya of the Kamakoti Pitha, Kumbakonam, is found on page cclxiii and cclxiv (263 and 264) of the second volume of Mackenzie's collection published by Wilson in 1828. It is extracted below :

Page CCLXIII : Report of Babu Rao, Maratta Translator to Col. C. Mackenzie, of his journey to Pondicherri, Karaical etc., along the coast for the purpose of collecting historical information, coins etc., from the 24th December, 1816 to 27th May 1817.

April 8th and 9th, 1817 : Proceeding by way of Nachargudi I arrived at Kumbakonam, collecting some coins thereof from the shroffs. 10th : I visited the chief priest of Sankarachari, expending four rupees on fruit etc., to introduce myself, and requested him to give me a copy of the copper inscription he had in his Matham, but some of the Karyasthalu (or managers of the Matham) directly denied that there were any inscriptions on copper-plate, being afraid of losing their original documents which they had saved through many years from destruction of different wars. I encouraged them much assuring them that I would take no original but only wanted a copy ; they answered that if I assured them only a copy was to be taken, and that I would give them a recommendation to my master regarding their discontinued Jagirs, and obtain their restoration of any of the discontinued villages, that he would give me a particular account of the Chola, Chera and Pandian together with that of the Rajas of Bijanagur as he was the Guru of all the Rajas. I accordingly gave them recommendatory letter. Then confiding in my assertions that I had only come to copy inscriptions, and collect historical information he was much pleased and promised to get me particular information of the Rajas that had ruled from the commencement of the Kali Yugam. He took me into his agraharam and showed me about 125 copper sasanams each con-

7. *See* Annual Report on Epigraphy, 1919-20 : No. 443 of 1919.
This stone inscription substantiates the grant of Viranarasimha which, however, has some confusion in date according to T. A. Gopinatha Rao, the Travancore epigraphist.

tained in five or six copper-plates, he gave a copy of two, presented me with a piece of cloth worth 5 rupees and gave me leave promising me to get me a particular account of the Chola Rajas together with several coins if I recommended him personally to my master at Madras, and got any assistance to recover their discontinued villages.

One of the records is 31/C item 60 subsection 5 from the Modi records from the Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjavur. There is a petition where a number of people had made a complaint to the then king of Tanjavur about the alleged misdeed of some Karyastha of the Matha. This interesting document belongs to the time of Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati who ascended the Kamakoti Pitha in the year 1851 during the time of the las king Sivaji of Tanjavur; and in this the petitioners in their introductory paragraphs give a brief but interesting account of the Matha. It is stated in the petition as follows :

> The Mutt of Sri Sankaracharya Svamy at Kumbakonam was a small Mutt[8] when it was at Kanchipuram. Raja Prataph Singh brought the Sankaracharya from Kanchi and built a Mutt at Dabir Agrahaharam, granted Mohini lands, offered him his first honour and respect, etc., etc.

This clearly shows that the Matha was shifted from Kanchipuram to Tanjavur during the time of the reign of Raja Pratap Singh of Tanjavur. We have fortunately enough of original documentary evidence of the Thanjavur Maratha rulers themselves to substantiate the above.

There is an order issued by King Pratap Simha of the Tanjavur Maratha Rulers preserved in the Madras Central Record Office as Record No. C-37/38-43 of the Tanjavur Palace Records. This is in Hemadipant Modi script. In this order the king had stipulated that the *sambhavana* to the Acharya of the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha should be paid at some uniform specified rates. The Acharya is mentioned as

> *Srimad Paramahamsa Parivrajakacharya Srimad Pujya Sankara Bhagavad Padacharyanam Adhishthane Simhasane Abhishiktanam Sri Chandrasekhara Sarasvatinam Pujyayoh Sripadayoh.*

In describing the Birudavali of the Acharya the king used the following phrases :

> *Srimad Sakala Bhumandalalankara. Trayastrimsat Kotidevata Sevita Sri Kamakshi Devisanata Sakshatkara Paramadhisthana, Satyavrata Namankita, Kanchi Divyakshetra Saradamatha*", *Stitanane*, etc., etc.

From the above, it will be very clearly seen that the Birudavali of the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha, which is existing today, was used in full in 1748 A.D. by King Pratap Simha of Tanjavur. There are a number of other Modi records of the same king and his successors, which go to reveal the great esteem and regard in which the Acharyas were held by Maratha Rulers of Tanjavur.

The question as to why the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha shifted its headquarters from Kanchipuram to Kumbhakonam arises for consideration. That the Pitha was established by Adi Sankara at Kanchipuram, and that it has been continuing in an unbroken line of great Acharyas is clear from the other evidence already shown here. As to why and when the Pitha shifted its headquarters to Kumbhakonam, we have clear evidence in another important public record. This is about a Court case belonging to the times of the 64th Acharya of the Pitha. In the year 1844 A.D., the authorities of Sri Sringeri Matha filed a civil suit in the Trichi district Sadar Amin Court that the right for the Tatanka Pratishtha of Goddess Akhilandesvari belonged only to that Matha. Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha was made the first defendant in the above civil suit. The plaint of the plaintiff, the answer of the first defendant, the reply of the plaintiff for this and the defendant's rejoinder, the evidence presented by both sides, and the judgment, are all now available to us in print. Ultimately the Court decided that the documents submitted on behalf of the Sringeri Matha were not reliable, and that the oral evidence adduced on their behalf was self-contradictory, and the suit was dismissed with costs. This suit bears the number O.S.No. 95 of 1844. This was taken in appeal No. 109 of 1846 and in special appeal petition No. 106 of 1848 to higher Courts and in both the appeals the Sringeri Matha's claims were disallowed with costs to this defendant. This one record is more than enough to give us a graphic insight into the affairs of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha about 120 years ago. This record contains an important point of reference. In the rejoinder of the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha, para. 20, the reasons for the shift of

8. In the report of Babu Rao to Col. C. Mackenzie reference is made to the Mutt's discontinued Jagirs and the request to their restoration. Probably it was in this stage that the institution is described as a small mutt.

the Matha fromKanchipuram to Kumbhakonam are clearly given. The following is a free translation of the relevant passage :

> The plaintiff in column 20 of his reply states that if it is true that the Kamakoti Pitha was established at Kanchipuram by Sankara and if Sankara's disciple was installed there, the first defendant should still be residing there only and the reason for his residence at Kumbhakonam has not been stated in the defendant's answer. It is not stated in any authoritative text that the Kamakoti Pithadhipati must necessarily live only at Kanchipuram and should not take up his residence in any other place. The first defendant's disciples and other staff of the Matha are still living in the Kanchipuram Matha and are still carrying on the daily Puja to the Sarvajna Pitha there. The first defendant's Parama Guru (that is Guru's Guru) wanted to reside on the banks of the river Cauvery and hence came to reside in Kumbhakonam. He brought along with him the Yogalinga Chandramaulisvara Swami, consecreeted by Suresvaracharya. The local Rajas and other disciples afforded every facility and convenience to him and hence he used to alternate his residence between Kumbhakonam and Kanchi--puram.

The above clearly gives the reason as to why Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha was shifted to Kumbhakonam. This record belongs to the time of the 64th Acharya, Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati V. He was the head of the Pitha from 1814 to 1851 A.D. His Parama Guru was the 62nd Acharya, Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati IV who adorned the Pitha from 1746 to 1783 A.D. It was this Acharya, who shifted his headquarters from Kanchipuram to Kumbhakonam in order to carry out his meditation and worship on the peaceful banks of the river Cauvery. He attained Siddhi in 1783 A.D. in Kumbhakonam itself. The traditional accounts of the shift of the Matha from Kanchipuram to Kumbhakonam assign it to the period of King Pratapa Simha, one of the Tanjavur Maratha Rulers who was a great devotee of the Acharya. This has been clearly corroborated by the Modi document of 1750 A.D. mentioned above. This king ruled between 1740 and 1768 A.D. This traditional account of the shift of the Matha is fully borne out by the statement made in the Court documents mentioned above. It is thus clear that in the latter half of the 18th century, the Matha was shifted from Kanchipuram to Kumbhakonam[9].

There is another record of 1783 A.D. which was given by the Raja of Sivaganga on September 10, in which the village Pulavacheri was granted to the Matha. This grant purports to give the village Pulavacheri in Salivahana Sakabda 1705, Kalyabda 4884, cyclic year Sobhana, Avani Masa, 28th tithi, Suklapaksha, Bhauma Vasara and Paurnimavasya day, to *Sri Kamakoti Pitha Singhasanabhishikta Srimad Sri Maha Bhagavatpadacharya Svami Matha situated in Sri Kanchipuram Divyakshetra*, for Svami Puja, Diparadhana, brahimin feeding, etc., etc. We know from other evidence that the 63rd Acharya came to the Pitha on 20th January, 1783 A.D., and on 10th September of the same year, the Pulavacheri record clearly establishes that the Pitha was *situated in Kanchipuram.* We have already seen that the Pitha had been shifted from Kanchipuram to Kumbhakonam only a few years ago and hence it can be safely deduced that the 63rd Acharya, Mahadevendra Sarasvati IV must have come to Kanchipuram immediately after ascending the Pitha probably on tour. This also fully bears out the statement mentioned in the Court document that the Acharyas used to live alternatively in Kanchipuram and Kumbhakonam and that the worship at the Matha at Kanchipuram was being continued by the disciples, since only a few years after the shift of the Matha, the grant clearly mentions that the Matha was *situated in Kanchipuram.*

Though the Matha was thus shifted to Kumbhakonam in the latter half of the 18th century, still in all the records of the Matha the Acharayas were still being mentioned only as Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pithadhipatis. For example, a Firman of the Nawab of Arcot of 1792 A.D. mentions that *Sri Kamakoti Sankaracharya* should be given all facilities while going to Tirupati, river Krishna, etc.

Another grant bearing the seal of Saadat Khan confirms a previous one by Dawud

9. *Cf.* 'The celebrated Dabir Pandit an expert in Revenue matters was another of the great men in his Court. He continued to serve the son of Pratap except for a short period and did much good to the State. He and Pratap welcomed to Kumbakonam the Sankaracharya of Kamakoti Pitha from Udayarpalayam whether the latter had shifted from Kanchi on account of the increasing Muhammadan troubles in the City.' *By* K. R. Subramanian, *The Maratha Rajas of Tanjore*, Chapter vii, page 48.

Khan, the original donor Naib of the Nizam from 1700 to 1708 to *Sankaracharya Gossain* of the village of Ponnambalam (Poonai) in the Karnataka Taluk of Hyderabad, measuring 250 chakras of dry land free of taxes. This document is dated 6 zilhijja in the 6th year of the reign of the Emperor Mohamed Shah, 5th August, 1725 A.D. There is a stone epigraph in the Grantha script of the 63rd Acharya, Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati in the Adi Kumbhesvara Svami Temple in Kumbhakonam. Here also, the Acharya is referred to as :

Sri Acharyasvamibhin nirmita
Kanchipithabhisni(kta)
Sri Mahadevendrayati ubhayam

Another stone epigraph in Grantha characters of the same Acharya is found in that temple itself which is as follows :

Salivahana Sakabdam 1722, *Dunmati varsham,*
Kumbhesvarasvami Somaskanda-murtikku
ardhamantapam, mahamantapam mudunnu
Sri Kanchi Kamakotipithadhipati Chandra moulisvara
dasabhuta Sri Mahadevayati dharmam.

It is significant to note that in a temple epigraph in Kumbkakonam itself, in the begining of the 19th century, the Acharya is referred to as Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pithadhipati only.

During the close of the 18th century, Avani Sringeri Mutt had sent a Srimukham to the then Acharya of the Kamakoti Pitha. The Avani Sringeri Mutt is one of the sub-divisions of the Saradapitha each having religious jurisdiction over specified areas of the Karnataka region ; the others being Sringeri on the Tunga, Virupaksha Sringeri, Sivaganga Sringeri and Karavir Sringeri. The Avani Sringeri has jurisdiction in the eastern portion of the Mysore territory bordering Tamil land. During the close of the 18th Century the Mutt began to tour the Tiruchirapalli district on the banks of the Akhanda Kaveri and when it was brought to its notice that it has encroached upon the traditional rights of the Kamakoti Pitham in that locality, the mutt forwarded a Srimukham to the Kamakotipitham making amends and informing the routes they would take without violating the *status quo* in the locality. The route includes Pudukottai, Madurai, Ramesvaram, Ramnad, Sivaganga, Tirunelveli and Travancore.[10] The Acharya of Kamakoti Pitha is referred to in this letter as :

Srimad Sankara Bhagavatapada charyanam adhishthane
Simhasanabhishiktanam Sri Kamakoti Pithadhipati
Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati.

Two letters were sent by the sovreign of Travancore towards the close of the 18th century or the early years of the 19th century to the pontiff of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha. These letters have been written by His Highness Bala Rama Kulasekhara Varma the then Maharaja of Travancore and have been addressed to His Holiness Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati who was the disciple of His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati of the Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha. The first epistle contemplates the sending of an young elephant to His Holiness as an offering to Chandramoulisvara ; while the second one tells that the same has actually been despatched. Both these epistles fervently pray for the contemplated visit of His Holiness to Trivandrum. These letters have been written in excellent Sanskrit in the Devanagari script and they are noteworthy for the sweetness of their language, choice of expression, depth of learning and devotion.

Both the epistles are undated. By a careful study of the genealogy of the Travancore ruling dynasty, one could come to the conclusion that these letters should have been written during the time of Bala Rama Varma, the first (Avittam Tirunal) who flourished between the years 1798-1810. There were three sovereigns of the Travancore ruling dynasty bearing the name of Bala Rama Varma. Bala Rama Varma I (Avittam Tirunal) flourished between 1798-1810. During his period, the pontiff at the Kamakoti Pitha was His Holiness Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati (1783-1814). Bala Rama Varma II (Svati Tirunal) flourished between 1829-1847 A.D. And, during this period the pontiff at the Kamakoti Pitha was His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati (1814-1854 A.D.) Bala Rama Varma III (Mulam Tirunal) flourished between 1885-1924 ; and during this period the pontiff

10. The Mackenzie manuscript, this Srimukham of the Avani Sringeri Mutt, the firman of the Nawab of Arcot, the manual of Pudukottah state (Vol. I, Chapter 3) referring to the large following of the peoples and the ruling family towards the Kamakoti-pitha tend to show that large portions of Andhra, Tamil and Kerala regions were offering their allegiance directly to Sri Kamakoti Pitha.

at the Kamakoti Pitha were His Holiness Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati (1857-1891), His Holiness Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati (1891-1907), His Holiness Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati (1907), and His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati, the present Head of the Kamakoti Pitha.

The two epistles were sent to His Holiness Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati, by the King Bala Rama Varma. These could not have been sent by Bala Rama Varma II (1829-1847) because the pontiff at Komakoti Pitha then was His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati. Both the letters bear the signature of the Court which tried the suit of 1847. Hence they could not have been sent by Bala Rama Varma III (1885-1924). Therefore they must have been sent by Bala Rama Varma I to the pontiff of the Kamakoti Pitha His Holiness Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati towards the close of the 18th century or the early years of the 19th century.

In these two epistles the Acharya is referred to as follows :

> *Srimad Kanchidivyayatana-nalinakara---mahamandana-*
> *Saradamathasarasijarajahamsanam* .... *Srimad*
> *Sankarabhagavadpadacharyanam adhishthane*
> *Simhasanabhishikta* .... *Mahadevendrasarasvati*
> *Padaravindayoh.*

In 1808 A.D., Chatrapati Maharaja Serfoji had sent a letter of invitation to the 63rd Acharya in which the Guru is referred to as follows :

> *Srimad Paramahamsa Parivrajakacharyavarya*
> *Srimad Sankara Bhagavatpadacharyanam Adhishthana*
> *Simhasane Abhishiktanam Srimad Chandrasekharendra*
> *Sarasvati Samyamindranam antevasivarya*
> *Sri Mahadevendra Sarasvati Sripadanam*
> *etc.*, (vide pp. 461-463.)

In 1839 A.D., the 64th Acharya, Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati performed the Kumbhabhishekam of Sri Kanchi Kamakshi temple. There is a stone epigraph in the temple which mentions this in Telugu characters as follows :

> *Svasti Sri Vijayabhyudaya Salivahana Sakabda* 1761 (1839 A.D.), *Vikari Nama Samvatsara* .... *Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pithadhipatulaina, Sri Chandrasekhara Svamulavaru, Kumbhakonamumunchi Kanchikivachchi,* etc., etc.

There is another interesting letter of 1858 A.D. written by the Garrison Officer of Kumbhakonam to the Agent of the Matha in which the Officer Commanding had informed the Manager that some sepoys who had misbehaved did so due to ignorance and that he had issued suitable instructions to them. The addressee of this letter is given as follows:

> ' *Soobhier the Agent of Sree Sankara chariar the priest of Sree Conjee Commacote Peetam at cusbah of Combaconum.*

There are a number of records which clearly prove that the Acharyas were described as ' Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pithadhipatis' only even after the Matha was shifted to Kumbhakonam.

A reference to the Inam lands and Inam titles of the Matha also shows that from ancient times onwards several lands in several villages round about Kanchipuram like Madhavaram, Ambi, Sivakanchi, Sevilivedu and Kundiyantandalam have been in the occupation and enjoyment of the Matha. In several of them, the original title of the grantee is written as " Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham " or " Kumbhakonam Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham ", etc. This also clearly shows that the traditional title of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha was continued undisturbed even though due to various reasons the Matha was transferred from Kanchipuram to Kumbhakonam.

Regarding the Mutt of Sankaracharya at Kumbhakonam, Mr. Hemingway, I.C.S., records a tradition in the Tanjore District Gazetteer (p. 208) for the year 1906 thus : " There is an important Smartha religious Institution here in the Matha of Sri Sankaracharya which is said to have been founded in the time of Sankaracharya himself by a Tanjore king who wished the saint to reside in his dominion."

In case this tradition is authentic, we infer that the building offered by the Tanjore King on the banks of the river Cauvery at Kumbhakonam may be an auxiliary one to that at Kanchipuram. Kanchi is one of the seven Mokshapuris of India.

> *Ayodhya mathura maya kasi kanchi avantika puri dvaravati chaiva saptaitah mokshadayikah.*

In the same way Cauvery is one of the seven sacred rivers in India.

Gange chayamune chaiva godavari sarasvati narmade sindhu kaveri.........

Both Kanchi and Cauvery are in the Southern region. In the 10th skandha of the *Bhagavata* while describing the Tirthayatra of Balarama the following sloka occurs :

...*Kamakotipurim kanchim kaverim cha saridvaram.* The Pitha at Kanchi should be necessarily supplemented by an auxiliary one on the banks of the sacred river Cauvery. Thus the institution should only be a branch like the branch mutt of Kanchi Pitha in other holy places such as Jambukesvaram, Varanasi Tiruvottiyur, Madhyarjunam, etc.

The river Cauvery in Kumbhakonam dries up in summer and the northern branch of Cauvery, the Coleroon a perennial stream, flows within seven miles north of Kumbhakonam. On the banks of the Coleroon river there is a village Nilattanallur and there is a dilapidated pavilion which is recorded in village accounts as Sankaracharya Mutt.

The Astikas of Madras who had an organization or Sabha for determining dharmic questions and correct lapses, if any, in the community were in the habit of assembling periodically in the premises of the Madras branch of the Kamakoti Pitha at 119, Thambu Chetty Street, G.T., Madras, which was dedicated to Sankaracharya Svami for the grace of Chandramoulisvara by one Vajrala Thyagarayadu in the year 1742. The Astikas were represented by eighteen Jaladhipatis, who were the accredited heads of the different communities. The meetings were presided by an elected *Sabhapati* at that time. The Sringeri Acharya in the year Sukla in the last century (1870), issued a Srimukham to the then *Sabhapati* of the Madras Mahajanas, Sriman Pandipeddi Krishnaswami Ayya in which the Acharya makes it clear that he has no intention to ac against the Kamakoti Pitha.

In the present century, the *Hindu Message* (Vani Vilas Press) published at Srirangam under the editorship of Mr. T. K. Balasubramania Iyer, Gurubhaktasikhamani (Sringeri), who brought out the Globe Edition of the works of Sri Sankaracharya wrote in its editorial on 10th May, 1923, describing the Tatanka Pratishtha consecration as follows :

" Never before in the annals of Trichinopoly have we witnessed the grandeur and enthusiasm that were displayed at the reception of His Holiness Sri Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha who arrived at Trichinopoly on the 23rd ultimo. The mile-long procession headed by richly caparisoned elephants and surging crowds with His Holiness seated high on the ivory palanquin in the centre surrounded by large concourse of Brahmins chanting the Vedas and followed by the numerous Bhajana Parties and Tevaram Parties, the rich and tasteful decorations all along the route which extended to nearly eight miles, the buoyant enthusiasm of the huge crowd that pressed on all sides just to have a glimpse of His Holiness's beaming countenance and that followed the procession right through to the end, the festive appearance of the whole town and the eagerness of everyone in the vast concourse of people to do some sort of service to His Holiness were sights for gods to see and they beggar all description. It showed in a clear and unmistakable way the strong hold of religion and religious ideals still on the people of the country. No Viceroy or even the Emperor himself could have evoked such spontaneous and heartfelt enthusiasm. It took nearly five hours for the procession to reach its destination. His Holiness had a smile or a word of cheer for every one of the assembled people and when he retired into the Mutt, His Holiness observed that the weariness of the journey was counteracted by the unprecedented enthusiasm of the people."

In the present century the learned Royal families of Cochin, Benaras and Pudukottah refer to the institution as '*Kamakoti Pithadhisthana of Jagatguru*'.

In the Subhalekha (invitation) sent to this Mutt on the occasion of the coronation of the present Maharaja of Mysore Sri Jaya Chamarajendra Wodayar, this Mutt is referred to as "*Sri Jagatguru Kanchi Srimat Sankara Bhagavatpadacharyanam adhisthane simhasanadhishiktanam.*"

The authorities of the Sringeri Mutt in a letter, dated 14th October, 1942 to Sri Visuddhananda Bharati who was residing in Kanchi in the building belonging to Sringeri Matha have informed that Kanchi is the seat of the great Kamakoti Pitha and the building of the Sringeri Matha there was not to be given the status of a Matha.

It will thus be seen from the above that the tradition, legends, copper-plate grants, stone epigraphs, literary evidence, contemporary records, all go conclusively to show that the Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha established at

Kanchipuram by Adi Sankara has been functioning there in an unbroken line of Acharayas. The Ambi grant, suppoited by the stone temple epigraph of the same place, clearly takes the antiquity of the Matha to the beginning of the 12th century A.D. Earlier to that we have the traditional accounts preserved in the Sankara-Vijayas and other literary works referred to. The later copper-plate grants spanning nearly 5 to 6 centuries and the profuse Modi and other contemporary records of the past centuries clearly prove the continuity of the Pitha as a great and powerful spiritual influence on the people. The Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha has thus an ancient and illustrious history and has from the day of Adi Sankara been serving as a centre of dissemination of Dharma and spiritual knowledge. No wonder that *Sri Muka Panchasati* mentions the Kamakoti Pitha as *Adima Para Pitha.* The greatness of the Pitha lies not merely in its antiquity. It lies in the fact that the Pitha was established and consecrated by Bhagavatpada Adi Sankara himself and the influence of the spiritual power of that great teacher is being continued in its pristine purity by a line of great Acharyas who have adorned the Pitha down the ages. The sacredness and sanctity of the Pitha and the divine influence of the Acharyas are more vital and important.

It is our good fortune that a Jivanmukta, who is considered by one and all as an *avatar* of Sankara himself, is guiding us from the Pitha. It is unique in the history of any ancient institution that the incumbent sheds lustre on the institution and the institution also imbues the incumbent with its own greatness.

Jivanmukto jagatyam nijaniyamatapassaktitah pujaniyah
sad-dharmasyodhi dhirshuh kaliyugajanusham bhagyato bhasate yah
Sri Kanchi Kamakoti gururapi ca tadadhyas yamanam hi pitham
dhamanyonyam dvayam tat prathayati nitaram naitadanyatra drishtam (*Svakritam*).

" The Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Guru who is a Jivanmukta, and for ever bent on the uplift of Dharma, is to be worshipped for the power and greatness of his own tapas ; He is adorning the Pitha due to the good fortune of the people of this Kali age. This Guru and the great and illustrious Pitha adorned by him, these two, shed lustre on each other. This rare event is not seen anywhere else. "

(Verse by the Author).

"MEETING WITH PERFECTION"

It was the first of June, 1966, the fourth day of the Athens Meeting Week. The Hill of the Pnyx stood framed in a glorious sun-set on the West, facing the Acropolis to the east, crowned by the famous Temple of the Parthenon dedicated to Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom and Peace. It was on this Hill that the *ecclesia* the convention of the people of Athens, used to meet of old. It was here that the orators, representing the people, addressed their fellow citizens. The Royal National Foundation could not have selected a better location for holding the Athens Meeting.

The Foundation was instituted by the late King Paul of the Hellenes: one of its major activities was the holding every other year, of an international cultural gathering in the capital of Greece; and it was called "The Athens Meeting". The object of the Athens Meeting was "to provide an opportunity for eminent contemporary thinkers from all over the world to express the human ideals and aspirations in the light of present knowledge and experience". Each invited scholar was to give a talk on a topic chosen by him on one of the evenings during the cultural week, in the open on the Hill of the Pnyx. Six of the seven participants were to be invited from other countries. His late Majesty King Paul had indicated that this was being so done in the spirit of the ancient Greek thinker Isocrates, who said: "We call Hellenes all who partake of our culture."

The first Athens Meeting was held in 1964. His Majesty King Paul had passed away before this Meeting. But his son who succeeded him, H.M. King Constantine, was the moving spirit behind the whole enterprise. Encouraged by the success of this venture, the Royal National Foundation organized the Second Athens Meeting in 1966. On the 29th May this Meeting was inaugurated by the King in the Temple of Athena on the Acropolis. The lectures on the subsequent days of the week were given on the Hill of the Pnyx. On the fourth day, the 1st of June, came my turn. I had chosen 'The Heritage of India' as my theme. Towards the conclusion of that speech I made the following observation:

> "There is a widespread doubt in the minds of intellectuals both in my country and abroad in regard to the future of the heritage of India in the face of the present encounter with science and technology. A visiting scholar from Yugoslavia expressed this doubt, a few months ago, to a living sage in South India, Sankaracharya of Kamakoti Pitham. The sage, who leads the ideal ascetic life as it obtained in ancient India, replied without any hesitation: "No damage will be done to the Soul of India. If anything, modern science and technical knowledge may serve to dispel the lingering superstitions and blind beliefs. The culture of India has

withstood many challenges, and has come out victorious each time. There could be no better authentic evidence to the immortal nature of India's heritage than the words of the Sage Sankaracharya. The heritage of India is not India's alone but of all mankind".

The reference to His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi in this passage was noted with particular relevance by the members of the Greek Royalty who were present at the meeting. Her Majesty Queen Frederika, Queen-Mother of Greece, and her daughter. H.R.H. Princes Irene, had been practising meditation for some time, and they were acquainted with Advaita-Vedanta through the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. They had come to India earlier on a State visit along with the late Majesty King Paul; but then they did not have the opportunity or time to get to know closely the spiritual side of India. The Queen-Mother and the Princess expressed a wish to meet His Holiness on their next visit to India. It was in accordance with this wish of theirs that they came to India in November-December 1966, and met His Holiness. The meetings took place in Kalahasti on the 4th and 5th of December, 1966.

Her Majesty Queen Frederika, Queen-Mother of Greece and Her Royal Highness Princess Irene came as seekers of truth; and they thought it supremely worthwhile to undertake this long journey, and were richly rewarded. The following is the gist of the interviews—the questions asked by the Royalty and the instructions given by His Holiness:

Q. Your Holiness! I am able to meditate with a measure of success while awake. But, the meditative experience does not come in dreams. What should be done to retain this attitude in the dreams also?

A. One need not worry about the kind of dreams one has. One who practises meditation in the waking stage, may not, when he goes to the dream state, experience the meditative attitude. The dreams may relate to non-spiritual phenomena. But the spiritual seeker should not be troubled over these; he should not think that such dreams constitute an impediment to his spiritual life. To think so, and to be troubled mentally would be an obstacle. What the seeker should be careful about is the waking life. He should devote as much of it as possible to the spiritual quest. If his endeavours in the waking state are in the direction of the Spirit, then gradually in dreams also one's spiritual nature will be reflected.

It is not dreams that affect waking life; it is the other way about. One who is fair-skinned in waking life usually dreams of himself in dreams as having fair skin. If he has dark-skin, in dream also he has a similar complexion. Thus, it is the experiences of waking state that get reflected in dreams, although in odd and queer forms. So, if the aspirant is vigilant in his waking state, and strives constantly to remember the Self, gradually in dreams also the same attitude will get reflected. If he succeeds in rendering his waking life free from violent passions and base desires, in course of time his dreams also will become placid and full of peace.*

Q. Will Your Holiness be pleased to prescribe a technique by which the concentration and equanimity of the mind may be facilitated?

A. Normally one breathes through one of the two nostrils, right or left. It is possible to change the breathing from one nostril to the other by effort. If the breathing is through the right nostril, and if it is to be changed to the left, what one should do is to put pressure on the right side of the body, which could be done by resting the right palm on the ground and making the body lean on that arm. For a change from the left to the right, the pressure should be put on the left side. Before the actual change takes place, the breathing would be through both the nostrils for a short time, say, two seconds. This is what may be called equalised breathing. If one practises to observe the equalised breathing, its period will become longer

*See the *Panchadasi*, a manual of Advaita (IV, 82): Relinquishing contrary thoughts, if one meditates without interruption he would achieve meditation even in dreams, etc., because of the residual impressions.

and longer. And, the equalised breathing will facilitate the gaining of mental balance and equanimity. The more one practises this, the greater will be the progress in achieving the balance of mind, and the ability to remain unperturbed.

Q. If the surroundings are not salutory, if there are people who are hostile to one's mode of life, if everywhere one sees evil and wickedness, what should one do?

A. One may be surrounded by wicked people who are treacherous and evil in their ways. But one should not be impatient with them, or show hatred towards them. On the contrary one should have sympathy for them, and compassion. No person is wicked by nature, but circumstances and upbringing make him so. There is no reason, therefore, to hate him for what he has been made into. And also, an aspirant should not have hatred for anyone. He should reason thus: "Since the wicked person is so because of circumstances and upbringing, he is to be pitied rather than hated. What would I do if some one whom I hold dear, say, my son, turns to evil ways? I would strive to correct him through love. Even so should I treat the stranger. In fact, there is no stranger for a truth-seeker; for all are his kindred. What would be my plight if I had been born and bred in those evil circumstances? I too would be behaving in a wicked way. So, let me see the same Self in the wicked man; let me not hate him.

Q. What is the distinction between the *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa* stages in *samadhi?* And, what is *sahaja-samadhi?*

A. *Savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa* are stages in the path of concentration and meditation. In what is known as *savikalpa-samadhi* the mind is steady without any distraction, contemplating its object wholly absorbed therein. In *nirvikalpa samadhi* which is the goal of yoga, the mind ceases to function, and vanishes once for all, leaving the self to shine forth alone. In Advaita too the path of meditation is recognised; but here the object of meditation is the distinctionless Brahman. What is called *sahaja-samadhi* is realised through the path of inquiry. It is the natural state of Self-realization, and one of utter unconcern for the fleeting phenomena.

Q. What should a leader do in regard to customs, usages, etc.? Even after he finds them to be not of any benefit for himself, should he follow them?

A. Those who are the leaders of a group, society, or state, should not neglect the established religious customs and usages. For themselves, they may not be in need of church-ceremonies, for instance, their advance in spirituality may not require these. But if they begin to neglect them, the people for whom the rituals are really helpful will also start neglecting them. This would be setting a bad example. In the words of the Bhagavad-gita, "The wise one should not unsettle the minds of those who are ignorant, and are attached to action; on the contrary, he should encourage them to perform what they should perform, by himself doing the appropriate actions well and with diligence". It is a duty cast upon the leaders and those that are at the top to lead the people from where they are, and not to refrain from participation in the traditional ways of worship.

Recording the indelible impression of the interviews and the unique blessing gained by the *darsana* of His Holiness, Her Majesty has observed thus:

"The two days we spent in his company will never be forgotten. There was pure spirituality. What strange fate has brought us close to him!"

Expanding the same impression, and reminiscing on what has been aptly described as the meeting with Perfection, Her Royal Highness said:

"Since some time now I find myself in a situation where there are no more questions to ask (except for details). Yet identification with the self is far from constant. Nevertheless the practice of application will also contribute in making it more permanent so that there is really no problem. Then I believe that Fate brings things when time is ripe. And what came as Fate's great gift was this meeting with Perfection whose blessing is more than I am able to cherish without being deeply moved.

"He mentioned that the astronauts must have experienced outwardly that which is usually felt inwardly by spiritual seekers—an outer mystic experience. We had the Grace of having both the outer and inner mystic experience in His presence and we are thankful for it. He appeared as the vivid link between Spirit and matter, a link (for the seeker) which showed that they are not separate. The world of appearance with this Sage, who quite obviously was a guest in the frail body, was there, but the Essence, with which the guest is identical, was there too, demonstrating that the world is not different from it. His gaze made the self cast off all the bonds of the ego, thus unveiling a pure reflection of what those eyes are identified with. How can the beauty of this be witnessed with dry eyes?

"The greatness of His blessing was so immense that this human container was incapable of holding it without its overflowing which resulted as tears. Tears of utter fulfilment which washed away the container, causing it to dissolve, for a while, into the Reality He symbolizes."

* * *

Exactly two years later, Her Majesty the Queen-Mother and Princess Irene came again to meet His Holiness—this time Her Majesty's niece and nephew also came with them: Princess Dorothea and Prince Karl. The interviews with His Holiness took place at Masulipatnam on the 6th, 7th, and 8th of December, 1968. In all, the Royal visitors spent more than eight hours with His Holiness, drinking deeply of his wisdom and experience, and basking in the full effulgence of his spiritual magnificence. From the moment of their arrival in Madras on the 3rd, to that of their departure from Madras, after the Masulipatnam visit, on the 11th for Bombay *en route* to Europe, they had but one thought—the thought about His Holiness. Each of them considered the meeting with him the most precious gift of Providence in their lives. They received the benign grace of the Great Master in an abundant measure.

The Royal visitors had meetings with the Master both severally and together. It was a remarkable experience to watch, on the one hand, the visiting guests addressing His Holiness questions that revealed great depth of sincerity and keenness of spiritual seeking and, on the other hand, the Master giving precise instructions and most lucid expositions on points which would help in the progress of one's inward quest. The outer world rarely figured in the conversations. The inward life was what the Royalty was primarily concerned with; and they were convinced that they had come to the most authentic source for light and guidance.

To those members of the Royal party who had lately begun the practice of meditation, His Holiness gave detailed instruction as to the technique that they could adopt. Each session of meditation could be divided into two halves roughly. During the first half, controlled breathing could be practised. After taking in a deep breath, the breath is to be retained as long as it is possible to do it conveniently and without strain. If, for instance, one could retain the breath for an optimum measure of 100 seconds, let one practise the breath-retention only for 50 seconds. After the retention, one should breathe out as slowly as possible. This is to be repeated during the first half of the meditation-session. Each time the breath is retained, one could devote the first few moments to the thought of the all-pervading Divinity which is the ground of the universe and of one's being. The advice was also given to increase slightly the daily meditation period. If, for instance, one devoted two half-hour sessions to meditation, one in the morning and one in the evening, one could add a third session of sometime lasting for a quarter-hour.

The Master enquired of Princess Irene about the progress she had made in her spiritual life. She said she had found in the practice of music a means for divine communion, and asked if she could pursue this particular mode of approach. His Holiness gave her instructions as to how through devotion to music she could develop the consciousness of the inner Spirit. Devotion to music and meditation could go hand in hand and help each other.

Her Majesty Queen Frederika asked about certain supernormal manifestations that appear while one progresses in the path of meditation. His Holiness said that one should not attach much importance to them; that one should not forget the goal of meditation which is enlightenment.

A question was put in regard to what one should do for retaining the higher consciousness in the last moments of one's life. After recalling a few instances of persons who were in full possession of their faculties and passed away in peace, His Holiness observed that what really mattered was not how one passed away, but how one lived in the present. One should endeavour to lead the life divine as much as possible, without worrying about one's possible condition in the last moments. If, besides practising meditation, etc., during one's life which should be sufficient, one also wishes for a peaceful end in complete possession of one's faculties, one should cultivate *praanayaama* and other techniques of *Yoga*. But this is not necessary after all, and does not contribute much to one's spiritual life.

Her Majesty the Queen-Mother said: "Some of us who have adopted vegetarian food habits are asked by friends in the West to state the reason for such adoption. If we give the reason as the desire to avoid causing pain to animal life, they ask if vegetarianism does not involve inflicting pain in the vegetable world." His Holiness explained clearly and in detail the basis of vegetarianism: "The ideal life of complete compassion and non-violence is possible only for a few; it would involve subsistence on fruits and leaves that fall from trees and plants. In the case of others there can only be gradual approach towards that ideal. The rule is: if it is possible to live by causing less injury to other lives, it is wrong to inflict more violence. It is on this principle that vegetarian diet is greatly to be preferred to meat-eating. In the first place, when vegetables are plucked, the plants are not destroyed, whereas meat cannot be had without killing the animal to which it belongs. Secondly, animals are more sensitive than plants; they have a greater number of, and keener, sense-faculties than the latter. In fact, there is not much difference in this regard between the animals and us, humans. The feeling of pain is almost the same; the suffering is of the same degree. The plants do not suffer to the same extent. Plucking vegetables or leaves is comparable to the clipping of nails and the cutting of hair. Thirdly, intrinsically there is not much to choose between cannibalism and eating of animal-meat. The arguments against the one hold good equally against the other. If the civilized peoples who are meat-eaters are against cannibalism, it is more on grounds of sentiment. It is clear. that meat-eating causes more suffering than living on vegetables. And, every effort for reducing the quantum of suffering is commendable".

The doubt was expressed by one of the members of the Royal party, whether humanity had not missed the chance of turning to spiritual values at the end of the last World War. His Holiness replied saying that no such generalized statement could be made about mankind as a whole. What is important is that individuals should be intent on inward progress. If they evolve spiritually, the world will improve. It is not to become great that one should aim at, but to become good; for, to be good is to be truly great.

Prior to leaving Masulipatnam on the 8th of December, 1968, Her Majesty and party took leave of His Holiness after about an hour of sitting in his benign presence. Little was spoken during this session. In his own characteristic manner, the Great Master blessed the Royal devotees; and they dragged themselves away, unwillingly to leave. The spirit of humility and ardent quest for the highest values was reflected in the reply that Her Majesty gave to the Chairman of the Municipal Council of Masulipatnam who met her in the special railway coach and entreated her to agree to a civic reception: "Thank you; but we have come all the way from Europe, not as members of Royalty but as humble devotees seeking the blessing and guidance of His Holiness."

—Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan

KAMAKOTIPURI AND THE PITHA

By

SRI ANANTANANDENDRA SARASWATI SWAMIGAL.

Kanchi, popularly known as Kanchipuram and styled as கச்சி (Kachi) in Tamil classical literature, is a city of celebrity, according to the popular saying 'Nagareshu Kanchi'. This city has been listed as one of the seven sacred cities of liberation (Mokshapuri). Kanchi is the only *Mokshapuri* in Peninsular India, the other six, Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya (Hardwar), Kasi, Avantika (Ujjain) and Dwaraka being situated north of the Vindhyas.

The city is referred to in the southern recensions of the Bhagavata Purana, (Adhyaya 71, verse 4, in the 10th Skandha in the Balarama Teerthayatra Prakarana) as '*Kamakoti-Puri Kanchi*'. Vallabhacharya in his Subodhini commentary on the Purana, styles the city as 'Kamakotipuri'. In the northern texts of the Bhagavata the city is given the name, 'Kamakoshnipuri Kanchi.' This sacred city is considered to be one of the foremost of the Sakti peethas of Bharat in the Tantric works. The word Kanchi literally means the gold ornament worn round the waist (Odyana-ஒட்டியாணம்). The Meru Tantra speaks of the city of Kanchi as the navel spot (Nabhisthana) of the cosmos.

The city has been described as the capital of kingdoms and the seat of princes in Puranas, Kavyas, Inscriptions and History. The Naishadha Kavya of Sri Harsha speaks of a prince of Kanchi present at the Svayamvara of Damayanti. The edicts of Asoka refer to the Kingdom of Satyaputta besides those of Chera, Chola and Pandya of the south. Apparently the reference here is to Tondaimandalam with its capital at Kanchi. There is a place called 'Satyavedu' on the northern border of Thondaimandalam. Pugalendi, a Tamil poet, refers to the people of Thondaimandalam as those who will never speak untruth — "Vaiyyakam perinum poyyuraikkamattar Thondainattar". Of the several names given to Kanchi, one is Satyavratakshetra and it will be hence easy to identify the Kingdom of Satyaputta as the territory around the Satyavratakshetra or Kanchi. Kanchi otherwise known in Tamil as Katchi (கச்சி) is spotlighted as an ancient city (மூதூர்) in Tamil classical literature.[1] The city has been the seat of the illustrious Pallavas and the Chola rulers (Andhra Cholas) of the post Vijayalaya Dynasty according to epigraphical and historical evidence.

That Kanchi is a great seat of Maha-Pithasthana has been acknowledged by the Visvakosha (as Mahapeethasthan).[2].

Kanchipuri is sacred to all Hindus, Vaishnavite, Saivite and Sakta alike. There are a number of temples dedicated to Siva, Vishnu, Ganapati, etc. in Kanchi, big and small, of architectural celebrity. Most of them are ancient. The shrines of Sri Varadaraja

1. பெரும்பாணாற்றுப்படை (Perumpanarrupadai)—*ll,* 408-411.

2. काञ्चीपुर एक प्राचीन महातीर्थ है....केवल तीर्थ ही नहीं, काञ्ची महापीठस्थान है ।

—Bengali Visvakosa, Hindi Edition by Nagendranath Basu of Calcutta.

(Hastisailanatha), of Sri Ekamranatha and Sri Kamakshi are the most celebrated of these temples. The Kamakshi temple seems to be one of the most ancient temples of our land since we find a reference to it in one of the old Tamil verses cited by Adiyarkunallar, in his commentary of the Silappadikaram (one of the five great Tamil classics) while dealing with Karikala's expedition upto the Himalayas.[3]

One important thing that strikes the shrewd observing pilgrim to Kanchi, is that the towers (*gopuras*) of the important temples of this city far and near, face the Kamakshi temple. The processions, of the *yatrotsavamurtis* (icons taken out during festivals) of all the temples of Kanchi are taken out only along the four principal streets (Rajaveethis) round the Kamakshi Temple. Above all these, it is of significance to find no sanctum sanctorum or Garbhagriha for the Devi in any of the Siva shrines within the limits of Kanchi city; be the temple small or big. But once just outside the boundaries of this holy city one finds Moola Vigrahas of the Devi in all Siva temples far and near to Kanchi. The reason for this is to be found in the *Kamakshi Vilasa Purana* wherein it is stated that in blessing Manmatha (God of Love), having been satisfied with his penance, Sri Kamakshi drew upto her Bilakasa-Svarupa (air form in a cave) all the Saktis (Powers of the Devi) enshrined in all the Devi shrines of the land. But later, on the prayer of Brahma, the Creator, She vouchsafed that all Siva Temples of the land save those in Kanchipuri, which was styled as Sivajitkshetra may have Devi shrines. The portion of Kanchi city in which the shrine of Sri Kamakshi is situated is called *Kamakoshtha* in Sanskrit and '*Kamakottam*' in Tamil.

A study of inscriptions on the walls of many a South Indian temple reveals that all Devi shrines inside Siva temples in South India were called as Kamakottams, after the Kamakoshtha of Kanchi.[4]

3. "கச்சி வளைக்கைச்சி **காமக்கோட்டம்** காவல்
மெச்சி யினிதிருக்கும் மெய்ச்சாத்தன்—கைச்செண்டு
கம்பக் களிற்றுக் கரிகாற் பெருவளத்தான்
செம்பொற் கிரிதிரித்த செண்டு"

4. South Indian Temple Inscriptions, published by the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras.

Place.	Part.	No.	Page.	
1. Chidambaram	Part 1	14	22	கோயிலுக்கும் திருக்காமக்கொட்டமு(கை)டய பெரிய நாச்சியாருக்கும் சாத்தி அருள.
2. Avinasi	,,	197	190	கொயிலில் திருக்காமக்கொட்டத்து னாச்சியார் பெருமிகருணை:
3. Vijayamangalam	,,	267	248	திருனாகீசுவரமுடையார் திருக்காமக்கொட்டத்தாலு(கை) தட(ய)ன னாச்சியாருக்கு அமுதுபடி.
4. Tiruvotriyur	,,	530	517	திருவொத்தியூருடையனாயனார் கோயிற்த் திருக்காமக் கொட்டமுடைய னாச்சியாருக்கு வெண்டும் ணிபந்தங்களுக்கு.
5. Tiruppalaivanam	,,	539	528	திருப்பாலவனமுடைய நாயனார் திருக்காமக்கொட்டம் இயாதிலும் பாயாதி நாச்சியாருக்கு.
6. Tirukkattuppalli	Part 2	597	586	திருக்காமக் கோட்டமுடைய நாச்சியார் அழகமர் மங்கையார்க்கு:
7. ,,	,,	598	586	திருக்காமக் கொட்டமுடைய பெரிய நாச்சியார் அழகமர் மங்கையார்க்கு கற்றளி.
8. Vallam	,,	635	613	இக்கொயில் சிகாமகோட்ட முடைய னாச்சியாருக்கும் வெண்டும் நிமித்தத்துக்கு.
9. Tirupazhanam	,,	1042	975	இக்கொயில் பூஜை நிலைகளும் திருக்காமக் கொட்டமுடைய நாச்சியார் கொயில் பட்டாசார்ய நிலையும்:
10. ,,	,,	1048	980	நான் எழுந்தருளுவித்த திருக்காமக் கொட்டமுடையார் திருப்பழனத் துடையாற்க்கு
11. ,,	,,	1049	981	இன்னயனார் திருக்காமக் கொட்டமுடைய பெரிய நாச்சியார்:
12. Koiladi	Part 3 Section 1	1175	1152	இக்கொயிலில் நான் எழுந்தருளுவித்த திருக் காமகொட்டமுடைய அகில நாயகியார்க்கு பூஜைக்கும்:
13. Hastigiri	,,	1209	1220	ஸ்ரீபுரவராதிசுபர காமகொட்டி(டி)ம்பிகாலப்தாவர பிறஸாத:
14. Chidambaram	Part 3 Section 2	1271 1272 1273	1321 1322	देव्या स्तस्याः शिखरिदुहितुः काम - कोष्ठस्थितायाः ... .

Three of the 63 Nayanmars (Tamil saints), Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar have referred to the Kamakottam of Kanchi and of them Sambandar has referred to even 'Kanchi Kamakoti.'[5] From these it is evident that only the Sakti Kamakoshtam has permeated throughout the land and that Sri Kamakshi is the central nucleus of Sakti.

Inside the Kamakshi shrine at Kanchi there is the icon of Adivaraha commonly called 'Kalvar', identified as one among the 108 Vaishnavite holy places. By the side of Kamakshi in Rajarajesvari pose, we find the Tapas Kamakshi and in front, the Srichakra consecrated in Salagramasila by Adi Sankaracharya. The Bilakasa is held to be spread under the whole of the Gayatri Mandapam in which stands the Garbhagriha of Sri Kamakshi Devi. The whole city is permeated with the air of the Bilakasa according to the *Kanchi Mahatmya*.

According to *arsha granthas* (old works), like the Sivarahasya, Markandeya Samhita, as per the biographies of Adi Sankara like the Anandagiri, the Vyasachaleeya, the Keraleeya, the Chidvilasiya, the Madhaveeya Sankara Vijayas and according to works like Sankarabhyudaya, Patanjalicharita, etc., it is clear that Sankara Bhagavatpada had an undeniable connection with Kanchipuri. Many of the above mentioned works refer to the consecration of the Srichakra before Sri Kamakshi by Sankaracharya. Sivarahasya refers to Kanchi as the place where Sri Sankaracharya spent his last days and attained liberation from mortal coils.[6] This theory has been corroborated by the more reliable historical information contained in the Guruparampara Stotra of Bharati Sannyasins (Sringeri Math ?) published by Dr. Hultzch[7] and from the information contained in the Guruparampara list of the Kudali Sringeri Math[8].

5. *எழுந்ததிரை நதித்துவலை நனைந்த திங்கள்*
இளநிலாத் திகழ்கின்ற வளர்சடையனே
கொழும்பவளச் செங்கனிவாய்க் **'காமக்கோட்டி'**
கொங்கையிணை யமர்பொருது கோலங் கொண்ட
தழும்புளவே வரைமார்பில் வெண்ணூ லுண்டே
சாந்தமொடு சந்தனத்தின் அளறு தங்கி
அழுந்தியசெந் திருவுருவில் வெண்ணீற் றானே
அவனாகில் அதிகைவீ ரட்டனாமே.

—திருத்தாண்டகம், அப்பர் சுவாமிகள்.

வாரிருங்குழல் வாள்நெடுங்கண் மலைமகள்மது விம்முகொன்றைத்
தாரிருந்தட மார்புநீங்காத் தையலாளுல குய்யவைத்த
காரிரும்பொழிற் கச்சிமூதூர்க் **காமக்கோட்ட***முண் டாகநீர்போய்*
ஊரிடும்பிச்சை கொள்வதென்னே ஓணகாந்தன் தளியுளீரே.

—ஓணகாந்தன் தளி, 6, சுந்தரமூர்த்தி சுவாமிகள்.

நச்சித் தொழுவீர் கள்நமக்கிது சொல்லீர்
கச்சிப் பொலிகா மக்கொடி யுடன்கூடி
இச்சித் திரும்பூ ளையிடங் கொண்டஈசன்
உச்சித் தலையிற் பலிகொண் டுழலூணே.

—ஆலங்குடித் தேவாரம், திருஞானசம்பந்தர்.

6. तद्योगभोगवरमुक्तिसुमोक्षलिङ्गार्चनप्राप्तजयः स्वकाश्रमे ।
तान्वै विजित्य तरसाऽक्षतशास्त्रवादैः मिश्रान्स काञ्च्यामथ सिद्धिमाप ॥

—Sivarahasya, Canto-9, Adhyaya-16, last sloka.

7. आगच्छत्स्वेच्छया काञ्चीं पर्यटन्पृथिवीतले ।
तत्र संस्थाप्य कामाक्षीं जगाम परमं पदम् ॥

Dr. Hultzch—Report on search for Sanskrit manuscripts in Southern India, published by the Government Press, Madras, 1905.

8. स्वेच्छया पर्यटन् भूमौ ययौ काञ्चीपुरीं गुरुः ।
तत्र संस्थाप्य कामाक्षीं देवीं परमगात्पदम् ॥

—Kudali Guruparampara Namamala.

To add to these one can see sculptures of Adi Sankaracharya in various poses, in temples of Kanchi, (both Vaishnavite and Saivite), and also in temples situated around Kanchi. It is rather curious that such Sankara images could not be seen in any other region connected with the life history of Sankara and his activities.

That Sri Adi Sankara established holy seats, or maths to carry unto posterity the torch of Advaita Philosophy lit by him is well known. That he established many such institutions is borne out by Anandagiri whose biography of the great philosopher is held as a safe guide by many a scholar. Historians, eminent men and jurists alike[9], have spoken of the many seats or pithas established by Adi Sankaracharya and Kamakoti Pitha as one of the principal ones among them.

The Sarvajna Peetha (the seat of the all-knowing) which Adi Sankara founded and ascended has been the beacon light of inspiration for the myriads of believing Hindus of the country for the past 2000 years or even more than 2400 years as per the date given for the founding of the Kamakoti Peetha in the Indian Chronology published by the Bharateeya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, with a foreword by our former philosopher president Dr. Radhakrishnan.

With Adi Sankara Bhagavatpada himself as the founder and the first Acharya, with Sri Kamakshi as the Sakti, with the Yoga Chandramouleesvara as the presiding deity of the Pitha, with the math being styled as Sarada Matha, and with a long and unbroken line of illustrious Acharyas, the Kamakoti Peetha has been the centre of worship, guidance, spiritual solace, Vedic and Sastraic lore, for the large number of its disciples and devotees.

9. (*a*) " He (Sri Sankara) founded a number of mutts in different parts of India and the best known among them are those at Sringeri, Dwaraka, Badari, Puri and Kanchi." (Sri K.A. Nilakanta Sastry, Professor of Indology, University of Mysore, in his History of South India—p. 410).

(*b*) " Sri Sankaracharya established several mutts the most notable of which are perhaps those of Sarada Peetha and Kamakoti Peetha." (S.S. Suryanarayana Sastry, Professor of Philosophy, Madras University in his " Sankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic.")

(*c*) " It was Adi Sankaracharya who first began to establish Hindu Mutts as we know them today. According to tradition he inaugurated several mutts or seats of learning at four corners of India, namely Sringeri (Sharada Peeth in Mysore) and the Kamakoti Peetha in Kanchi in the south, Badrinath in the Himalayan region in the north, Jagannath or Modern Puri in the east, and Dwaraka in western Gujarat." (Report of the Hindu Religious Endowment Board, 1962, p. 15).

(*d*) " Sri Sankara defeated Buddhists and other sectarians in disputation and established mutts or centres of religious learning and practices in the north, south, east and west of India. Srinagar (Badari), Dwaraka, Puri, Sringeri and Kanchi were his far-flung capitals." (World Religions—*By* Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer).

(*e*) " The establishment of seats of worship at places like Kanchi, Sringeri etc., where his successors carry on the worship of deities even today in all its fullness is a further proof of the view held by the Acharya that due performance of rites is an integral feature of his teaching. (Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Ganganath Jha, former Vice-Chancellor of the Allahabad University in the Bhakta —Kusumanjali presented to H. H. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati, Sringeri, (1938) printed by the Vani Vilas Press, Srirangam.)

(*f*) " Not less than *Seven Mutts* being among the most celebrated owe their origin to great Advaita Philosopher Sri Sankaracharìar ". (Sir S. Subramania Iyer, Chief Justice and Sri V. Bhashyam Iyengar ,Judge, High Court of Madras in their judgment in 1903)

(*g*) " Sri Sankara himself assumed the headship of Sarvajna Peetha, the central seat of knowledge at Kanchi "—Justice Satyanarayana Rao in his judgment in C M P. No. 2591 of 1951—1 M.L.J. 557).

SAYINGS OF JAGADGURU

All of you are part of me. What I must pray to God is to bless me to develop my own internal strength. When I achieve that, you will reform yourself automatically. So, when I pray for myself, I pray for you all.

Advaita:

It will be good if miseries like hunger, disease, death, dishonour, anger, poverty etc. do not aflict us. But they will come as long as the body lasts. On account of what do we take a body? We have to reap the consequences of the good and bad deeds done in the previous births. For that purpose God endows us with a body. The sins that we commit are the cause for the body. If we do not commit any more sins, we shall not be endowed with a body hereafter.

So if sin is prevented, birth and body will be prevented and so misery will also be destroyed. Why do we commit sins? We desire to possess an object. We desire short-cuts to obtain it. That is sinful. Therefore, if we remove desire which is the cause of sin, there will be destruction of misery. How to remove desire? Desire arises only in respect of objects other than us. There arises neither desire nor hatred in regard to ourselves. Therefore, desire will not arise if other objects are rendered identical with us. This secondlessness is Advaita.

What does 'advaita' mean? Its meaning is 'without a second'. That there is no second does not appear to us to be true. There are thousands of things. But Vedanta teaches that what we see in this world as many are illusory. It declares that all are of the nature of Isvara. We should dissolve ourselves too as that Isvara. Then, there will be no second entity.

* * *

An actor, who is a distinct individual in private life, appears on the stage in one role today and in another role tomorrow. The real personality of the actor is hidden behind the make-up on the stage. On the stage he is a different person each day. God is eternal and changeless. But He appears to assume different forms on account of the drapings, which is *maya* that covers His real personality.

* * *

It is worthy of note that whatever their mutual differences may be, all thinkers belonging to schools other than Advaita, are one in their attack on Sri Sankara's views. This should be regarded as a tribute paid by them to Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada. Each of them singled out Advaita, as expounded by Sri Acharya, as the only system worthy of taking notice of for the purpose of criticising. According to Advaita, the ultimate bliss is the experience of non-difference between the *Jivatman* and the *Paramatman*. Acharyas of other schools of thought would wish to have at least a trace of distinction between the two so that the *Jivatman*, stand-

ing apart, may be able to enjoy the realisation of the *Paramatman*. Thus, the difference between the several systems of Hindu religious thought is slight, as all are agreed upon the ultimate realisation of the Supreme. But when it comes to a question of expounding each system, this difference got magnified to the point of violent opposition. And yet we find that in their ultimate reaches, all of them speak the language of the Advaita. This shows that the expansive heart or Sri Adi Sankara accommodated all views on the Ultimate Reality and all approaches to it. Though other systems quarrel with Advaita, Advaita has no quarrel with any.

The catholicity of Advaita is also evident from the fact that pronounced Advaitins like Vachaspati Misra, who lived about one thousand years ago, Vidyaranya and Appayya Dikshtar wrote encyclopaedic works on other systems with a fidelity of exposition rarely equalled and much less excelled by the protagonists of those systems themselves. Appayya Dikshitar says that as God's Grace is required to reach the Ultimate Reality, and as that Grace can be obtained only through *bhakti*, he was expounding the other systems which promoted this *Isvara-bhakti*.

Advaita is based on the fundamental distinction between the seeing subject or *drashta* and the seen objects, *drsya*. The Paramatman is the ultimate Seer ; all else is the seen. Likewise, in each person, there is the *drashta* ; the rest which is juxtaposed to it is the *drsyam*. *Drk* (Seeing) is *jnaana*. That *jnaana* is the Paramaatman than Whom there is no other Seer. This *drashtaa* (seer) which is the inmost self of each person gets connected with the limitations or the *upaadhis* which constitute the body, extending from the internal organ or the *antahkarana* to the external organs, from nails of the toes to the hair on the crown (*nakha sikha paryantam*). When these limitations are analysed away, the residue is pure intelligence (*suddha jnaana svaroopah*). In any process of seeing, it is not the bodily organs that see. It is the *drashta* which sees. Generally we speak of the body seeing, but it does so only by virtue of its association with the *drashtaa*. If an iron pan is said to be hot, it is so only by virtue of the fire which makes it hot. The pan by itself, that is, without the aid of the fire, cannot become hot. So also, the body sees only in conjunction with the *drashtaa*.

This *drashtaa* is of the nature of consciousness, *jnaanasvaroopa*. It does not act. *Jnana* does not have the function of doing. It is the limbs that can act. The *drashtaa*, which is pure consciousness has no limbs by which it can act or enjoy. So it has neither *kartrtva* agency, or *Bhoktrtva* power of enjoyment.

The *atman* neither acts nor is affected *na karoti na lipyate*. When the *atman* is spoken of as acting it is from the empirical *vyaavahaarika* point of view - *kurvannapi na karoti* says the Gita.

It is the one Paramaatman, one *chit*, that appears in different bodies as different *jivas*. *Kshetras* (bodies) are different ; the *kshetrajna* (the *chit*) is One. This *chit* is the full, the infinite. What is full is one. When what is everywhere is confined within limits then duality (*Advaita*) ensues. When it is unconfined, it is non-dual *advaita*.

Advaita and Science

Till about fifty years ago, the eminent scientists were intent on establishing through enumerating the elements that those elements were absolutely distinct from one another. But now the scientists deny any distinction among the visible and invisible modes of matter, and proclaim that all matter is a transformation of one energy. Thus, gradually the modern scientists reject difference and emphasize non-difference. The foremost among the scientists, Einstein, Sir James Jeans, and others, come very close to the Advaita siddhanta of the Upanishads as taught by Sankara Bhagavadpada, by offering proofs for the relativity of the objective world and its dependent reality.

Bhakti:

Who is God and what is His definition ? In almost every religion, God is referred to as the Creator, the Karta, responsible for the creation and sustenance of the Universe. Since every effect must have a cause, it is inferred that there must be an ultimate cause, namely, God for the Universe. This is brought out in the *Brahma Sutra* by the expression, "Karta Saastraartthatvat". Another definition of God is that He is the dispenser of the fruits of our actions, be they good or evil—Karmaphala daata. The question may be asked why we should have *bhakti* for a God who is the Creator and Dispenser. These are His self-chosen functions and He does them. Why should we have devotion to one who created, not at our request, and who dispenses, not according to our choice ?

This question does not arise in the case of schools of thought which deny a God altogether. Among the Vaidika systems, the Saankhya denies a Creator-God and the *Poorva Meemamsa* has no use for Him. It is a non-intelligent principle that is responsible for the world according to the former, and the dispensation of fruits of actions is due, according to the latter, to *adrshta*, and a God is unnecessary for the purpose. Sri Sankara Bhagvatpada combated both these positions and established that as *jada vastu* (inanimate thing) cannot come from another *jada vastu*, an intelligent God alone must be the cause of the Universe. He also showed that a *chaitanya* (power) is necessary to dispense fruits of *karma* according to merit.

Having established that there is a Creator, who is the *srshtikarta* (Creator) and the *phala-daata* (Dispenser of Fruits), the question remains why should we show *bhakti* to Him ? The *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali provide the answer. After defining Yoga as the control of mind's activity, the question of the way to control that activity comes up for consideration and it is answered that this can be brought about by the worship of God, who is free from any imperfection or blemish, who remains unmoved and unmovable, who is the *stthaanu* (Stable One), amidst the imperfect and the Unstable things of the world. Being the all-knowing Intelligence, God is not affected by anything which could distract the mind and prevent its control. It is such an ideal that we should have before us, to train ourselves in mind control, so that the mind may be almost absolutely steady like a flame in place where there is no breeze. Since concentrated meditation on a thing transforms one into the likeness of the thing meditated upon, meditating on God, who being omniscient is still unmoved and unaffected by want or desire, makes one like God Himself. As one holds fast to a steady pillar to prevent from being tossed about, so too should one bind oneself through *bhakti* to God, to study one's mind.

Though Omniscient God is immanent in every creature and knows what is in the heart of every person, yet, if what we wish to say in prayer remains unsaid, it afflicts our heart and so prayer heals that affliction. By prayer, we do not seek to change what God ordains: in fact, we cannot do so. We go to Him to remove our impurities. As Tiruvalluvar said, we attach ourselves to Him who has no attachments to rid ourselves of our attachments. A devout consciousness that God exists will itself do the miracle of alchemising us into purity of nature. We obtain a spiritual charge into our frame by being in His presence.

Dharma

It is natural that man should seek to satisfy his wants like hunger, thirst, and a place to rest. There are duties which an individual has towards himself, the social group, the nation and the world. Ordinarily the performance of these duties remains on the level of satisfying the creaturely wants. But there is a way of performing these duties which will elevate everyone concerned spiritually. That is dharma.

Discipline:

All religious disciplines are intended to save us from ourselves. We tie up a cow which is prone to graze in forbidden fields. This is done not only to save the crops from being eaten by the cow, but also to save the cow from getting beaten.

* * *

A person who desires to become a good wrestler has to regulate his diet and habits and also practise physical exercises regularly, in order to develop the necessary muscular strength and stamina. If such a hard discipline is necessary for a purely physical purpose, how much more rigorous the discipline should be to attain the spiritual purpose of life, namely, the attainment of the Ultimate Reality?

Do's of life:

You must consider other women as your own mother. Regard other lives as your own. Always speak the truth even if you are about to lose your life. Quarrels must be rooted out. Everyone must strive for wisdom and for soul's advancement. You must love everyone equally. Everyone must think that all people should live happily.

Duty:

There is not much use in reviewing all that we have been able to do in the past. On the contrary, we should bestow our thoughts on what we have to do in the remaining years that are given to us by God in this life. What has to be done is to gain the state of freedom from all action. In the Bhagavad-gita, the Lord declares repeatedly that the state of freedom from

action cannot be obtained by remaining quiet (without performing our duty). It is by performing action that the state of actionlessness can be realized. Let us then perform our allotted actions. It is the performance of allotted actions that constitutes service to the Lord, worship of Him and becomes the means to obtain His Grace.

Education:

Right education should make us know that God is Truth. Knowledge must fill one with good qualities, through which alone one can realise the Truth, that is God. Therefore, the goal of knowledge is the understanding of the ultimate Truth. The first fruit of education must be humility and self-control. Education that does not produce these qualities is useless.

* * * *

In other countries ethics is an end in itself. But in Hindu philosophy, ethics is one of the means to knowing the Truth. If children are trained to observe high ethical standards many of the administrative worries of the Government will cease to exist.

* * * *

Corruption and fraud are on the increase now-a-days. These will be dispelled only when people are imbued with true devotion. Education is of no use without inculcating this devotion. The ills of today are the by-product of an educational system which does not instil devotion in the student.

* * * *

We must learn to put a curb on the animal propensites, and purify our minds. By good deeds we must convert the material goods into religious merit (*punya*) which alone is legal tender in the worlds to come. Earning and hoarding should not become the ends of life. A career-oriented education is no education. What should first be inculcated in young minds is respect for dharma.

Ego:

We are always engaged in some action or other. Even so there is no room for us to feel egoistic that we are the doers. Energy is needed for any kind of action. The Divine Mother is that Ocean of Energy. All our energy is only a drop from that Ocean. It is only by the Grace of that Ocean of Energy that we turn out all these actions. If we realize this there is no room for egoistic feeling.

* * * *

We should be very careful about ego and pride. We may free ourselves from egoistic feeling. But if we feel proud about this, that is itself another form of ego.

Environment:

There is an indwelling divine soul in man, which, in the end, must bring him back to God. Do not blame people so much as the environment into which they are born and bred. Their surroundings and circumstances force them to become worse than they really are. That is true of both the East and West. Society must be brought into tune with a higher note.

God:

If one asks "who made this cart?", one may find out which carpenter made it. But ask, "who made this plantain tree?"; though a recent creation, nobody can say who made it, or who laid its trunk in layers and with what tool. Two days ago this flower was a bud; to-day it is a pretty rose blossom. Every petal of it has several veins. You may doubt the need for knowing who made the rose. But then, whoever made it must have been a genius. If we know who that genius is, one can ask of him whatever we want. This creator of wonders must be a single person. Since the pattern is the same everywhere, the person must be one.

* * * *

A tree sprouts from the earth, is sustained by the earth, and is finally absorbed by the earth when it decays. So too the world and all the beings are born out of, sustained by, and dissolved into God. The perceiver within us is the origin of the things perceived. As the same electricity shines in different colours and with varying brilliance according to the colour, size and power of the bulbs, so too the same Isvara is within all of us and looks through the window of our mind at all things without, which are rooted in Him.

God with Attributes:

The seeking soul starts with a conception of the object of his quest and that

object is endowed in the mind of the seeker with the several qualities regarded as ideal qualities. To the seeker, the object of the quest possessing these qualities may be God or a Mahatma or a Guru. So people sometimes love to worship an Ishta Devata, (personal god). By worshipping they love Him as the embodiment of these ideal qualities and attributes. This worship born out of such love has its effect on the devotee and produces in him slowly and gradually an attraction for these qualities and transforms him slowly and gradually as the possessor of the qualities themselves.

Happiness:

A person may have everything that contributes to happiness, and yet if he has not developed the proper frame of mind, he cannot be happy and contended. When his mind is a slave to discontent, anger and envy, he cannot have peace and happiness. Like water kept in a leaky pot, everything he has will prove useless to him. Therefore we should first of all seek God's help to cleanse our minds of all passions and impurities.

Human Weakness:

We try to hide our faults before others and to show off only our merits. Sometimes we shed tears over our faults. There is no use in merely weeping. On the other hand, we should remind ourselves of our faults at the end of each day and pray to God to give us strength to resist evil thoughts and deeds and help us not to repeat the mistakes we have committed.

Leaders:

Those who are the leaders of a group, society or state, should not neglect the established religious customs and usages. They may not be in need of church-ceremonies, for themselves. Their advance in spirituality may not require these. But if they begin to neglect them, the people for whom the rituals are really helpful will also start neglecting them. This would be setting a bad example. It is a duty cast upon the leaders and those at the top to lead to people *from where they are.*

Liberation:

Death is not necessary for a man to attain liberation. If one is able to get over sorrow, fear, hate and lust, that is verily liberation. We speak of water proof cloth. Similarly if we too become sorrow-proof, hate-proof and lust-proof we are liberated here and now.

Literature:

To know the physical condition of a man the doctor examines his heart. Is there such a heart to a nation, whose examination would enable one to know the spiritual eminence of a nation? There is! It is the words of the great poets of that nation.

Love:

In all that you do, let love be the sole motive. Any deed must be with reference to another. Action implies the acted-upon as much as the agent. Let action be out of love. I am not here referring to the Gandhian gospel of Ahimsa. There may be situations which demand violence. Punishment, for instance, may be necessary. Even wars may have to be waged. But whatever be the nature of the action the agent must act out of love. Passions such as desire and hatred, anger and malice must be totally eschewed. If love becomes the guiding principle of all deeds, then most of the ills of the world will vanish. This, you may carry as the message of the sages and saints of India.

* * * *

Life without love is a waste. Every one of us should cultivate Prema or love towards all beings, man, bird and beast. If we are full of this universal love, we shall feel no sorrow.

That which has a beginning must have an end, is an inexorable rule. *Prema* (Love) is no exception to this rule and so *prema* is not unmixed with sorrow. When a beloved one dies, the survivor suffers grief. On that account is it wrong to cultivate love towards others ? No. But there is a *prema* which does not produce grief in the end. We should seek this *prema* that is indestructible, namely, *Prema* to God, who is indestructible. All things on earth and in heaven may die out ; but God is eternal. Everything else springs from Him, lives by Him, and, at death, goes back to Him. Loving God, if we look upon all things as God, we shall have in effect loved them as intensely as we love God. If we love everyone and everything

around us as a God, even if they disappear, we will not be afflicted by grief, because our love of God will continue to remain.

Meditation:

Every day, at least for a little time, we must quieten the mind, stop it from thinking of material things and divert it to meditate on God. Such meditation gradually clears the intellect and this becomes a means to subdue anger and desire. To a man who has taken up this means, step by step, enlightenment will come very soon.

* * * *

All of us take care to keep our bodies and clothes clean. But do we bestow any attention on our inner or mental cleanliness? Inner impurity is the result of desire, anger and fear. It is common knowledge that when one is in the presence of one's mother, one tends to hold his evil thoughts under control. Similarly, in the presence of the Divine Mother, we can control our evil thoughts. We can cleanse our hearts only by the *Dhayana-thirtha* (holy water of meditation) of the Divine Mother.

Offerings:

What is the significance of making offerings to the idols installed in temples? This is done as an expression of gratitude to the Power that created all things. Man by himself cannot create even a blade of grass. We will be guilty of gross ingratitude if we do not offer first to God what we eat or wear. Only the best and the choicest should be offered to God.

* * * *

We see in the dinners of modern day a man proposing toast for the health of another. We actually see one man eating, though it is said to be meant for the health of another man. How could the other man benefit, while this man takes the food?

All this arises out of a certain mentality of the people. The very mentality benefits the other man concerned. So also though the oblations in sacrifices and other ceremonies are either offered to the fire, or to the priests they add to the power of the divine forces that protect us. If we cultivate this mentality, the divine forces would also reciprocate it and shed their grace on us.

Polytheism.

Some Western scholars have dubbed Hindu religion as polytheistic. The uniqueness of our religion lies in the fact that under whichever name a devotee worships his *Ishtadevata*, that manifestation of God which appeals to him most—he considers Him as the all—pervading self, Pramatma. In fact, the culmination of all conceptions of the Supreme Being is in Monism. That is Advaita Vedanta. Isvara, Narayana and Parasakti are all different aspect of the one Supreme Being. This is visibly illustrated in the Divine forms of *Ardhanaareeswara* and *Sankara Narayana.* Such manifestations of the Divine are installed in many South Indian temples, such as Ardhanareeswara at Tiruchengode, Sankaranarayana at Sankaranayinar Koil in Tirunelveli, and Harihara in Mysore. Siva and Vishnu are also found together in the temple at Tiruparkadal near Kaveripakkam.

Prayer:

The purpose of prayer is not to petition for benefits. Such petitioning implies that God does not know what we want, which will militate against His Omniscience, or that he waits to be asked and delights in praise, which will degrade Him to the level of ordinary man.

Then, what is prayer?

When we equip ourselves to realise that the "I" we love so much is "He", our mind becomes saturated with Him. We think of Him not for securing any favours but because we cannot help thinking of HIM, having realised that the soul within us is none else than He. When this realization takes deep root, the mind enters the state of *Avyaajabhakti*— devotion without motive. It is to get this equipment that we have to pray.

Religion:

Religion alone can provide cohesive force to a community and a country. True and abiding unity can be achieved only on the basis of religion and spirituality. The most intense love that humanity has ever known has come from religion.

Religion and Science:

Some people want our scriptures to stand the test of science and reason. But the scriptures are there only to delve into what is beyond science and reason.

Religious Tolerance:

According to Sri Adi Sankara, no school of thought is foreign to Advaita. In the scheme of the path to realise *Advaitaanubhava* every system contributes an essential step and so Sri Sankara used the truths of each of them and pressed them into his service. By its very name, Advaita negates duality and dissension and comprehends every warring sect and system into its all-embracing unity. In fact, the survival of Hinduism is itself due to this Advaitic temper, which sees no distinction between Saivam, Vaishnavam and other denominations. Sri Adi Sankara underlined the essential unity of all sampradayas and sects and saved Hinduism from disruption. All denominations have the common Vedic basis. By bringing to our minds all the great Acharyas, we can acquire that peaceful frame of mind and develop that catholic temper and universal accommodation characteristic of Sri Adi Sankara and of the Advaita Vedanta he expounded, which will enable us to live in peace and amity, so essential for securing universal welfare.

Religious Unity:

The various religions are like the various arches of a bridge. To a man standing under a particular arch, that one would loom large and the others would appear small. But the fact is that all arches are similarly constructed and are of the same dimension. As God cannot be different, why should there be denying of any religion? The religions are many only to cater to the different tastes of men. This should not lead to religious fanaticism and hatred.

The dancing Nataraja and the reclining Rangaraja are but dual expressions of the one Supreme. Different schools of philosophy have come into existence to satisfy the needs of varying human temperaments, tastes and aspirations and any path, if consistently pursued, will lead to the same goal.

To whatever school one may belong, one ought not to linger or stop on the way. If a person adheres to the chosen path without faltering, God will dower each votary, whatever his predilection, with constancy of faith to pursue his path with devotion. When it is recognised that all paths lead to the same goal, there is no necessity to change the path one is already following. There is also no room for hatred towards a person following a different path. The temple, the God installed therein, and the form of worship, all these three may differ for different people, due to difference in taste. But what is required of one is to persist in the path one is following.

A true *jnani* (Man of Enlightenment) creates an atmosphere of detachment and holiness around him and draws innumerable people towards him. Such great jnanis have arisen in the world from time to time no matter whatever religion they professed. All these Prophets and Saints proclaimed the same Truth, each in his own way, and if they happened to come back to life now and meet together, there will be perfect unity in their messages. It is the followers that have put into their mouths more than that they said and wrangle with others, freezing the original teachings, mangled in their hands, into institutional forms, which foster narrowness and bigotry.

Service:

Do reflect often on the great dharma of service to fellow creatures. Think of the benefits we receive from the five elements, the sun, the moon, the fields and the trees, the animals and the birds. What is it that we do in return for all this?

We are not born all to ourselves, nor do we die all alone. We are born in a society. The society breeds us up. How do we show our gratitude to society?

Kural says that there is no salvation for one who has committed the sin of ingratitude. So let us ask ourselves every night before we go to bed: "Have I done today any service to any being?" Our right to being called 'human' rests only in the answer to this question.

* * * *

Whether really any man does good to others is the question. Does a man really benefit the person to whom he wants to do good? This is a matter open to question. The only thing certain about it is: when a man seeks to do good to others sincerely, irrespective of whether or not he actually does good to the other, he certainly does a great deal of good to himself. His mind gets purer. That alone is sufficient justification to engage in good works.

* * * *

Everybody has at least one weekly holiday. Of course some domestic problems will have to be attended to in this holiday. But everybody should endeavour to find time in the holidays to do some physical service for the society at large. Even the poor can help others by physical service.

Standard of Living:

It is no rise in the standard of living, if a man who is now drinking coffee twice is enabled to drink four times a day, or if a man who is having two dhoties is enabled to purchase twenty dhoties instead. Mostly the so-called rise in the standard of living is only another name for increasing the wants of man. This trend in increasing the wants of man is not prosperity, but poverty. Man should be taught contentment and that is real rise in standard of living. All the people should be enabled to get the bare necessities of life. Plans should be oriented to this end only. For this, even the richest should lead a humble life.

* * * *

There is no point in asking people to improve their standard of living. What should be aimed at is the improvement of the quality of life.

Suffering:

Suffering is universal and everyone wishes to get rid of it and attain happiness. To get rid of suffering, no palliative having temporary effect, will be of avail. The root cause of suffering must be eradicated. We can get rid of white ants only when we get at and destroy the mother insect inside the ant-hill. If we reflect on the root cause of suffering, we will find that we suffer because of the physical body. Suffering will persist so long as we retain the consciousness of our physical body. To get rid of suffering we must get rid of our body-consciousness.

Wisdom:

A heavy log of wood is not easily lifted or shifted. It requires a number of hands to do so. If the same log is immersed in water, it becomes light and even a child can move it without effort. Similarly if we learn to immerse our load of suffering in the water of Wisdom, it will become extremely light and we can take whatever suffering easily.

KANCHI KAMAKOTI

(Artist : VINU)

Kaamadughaa bhava Kamale
Kaamakale Kaamakoti Kaamaakshi

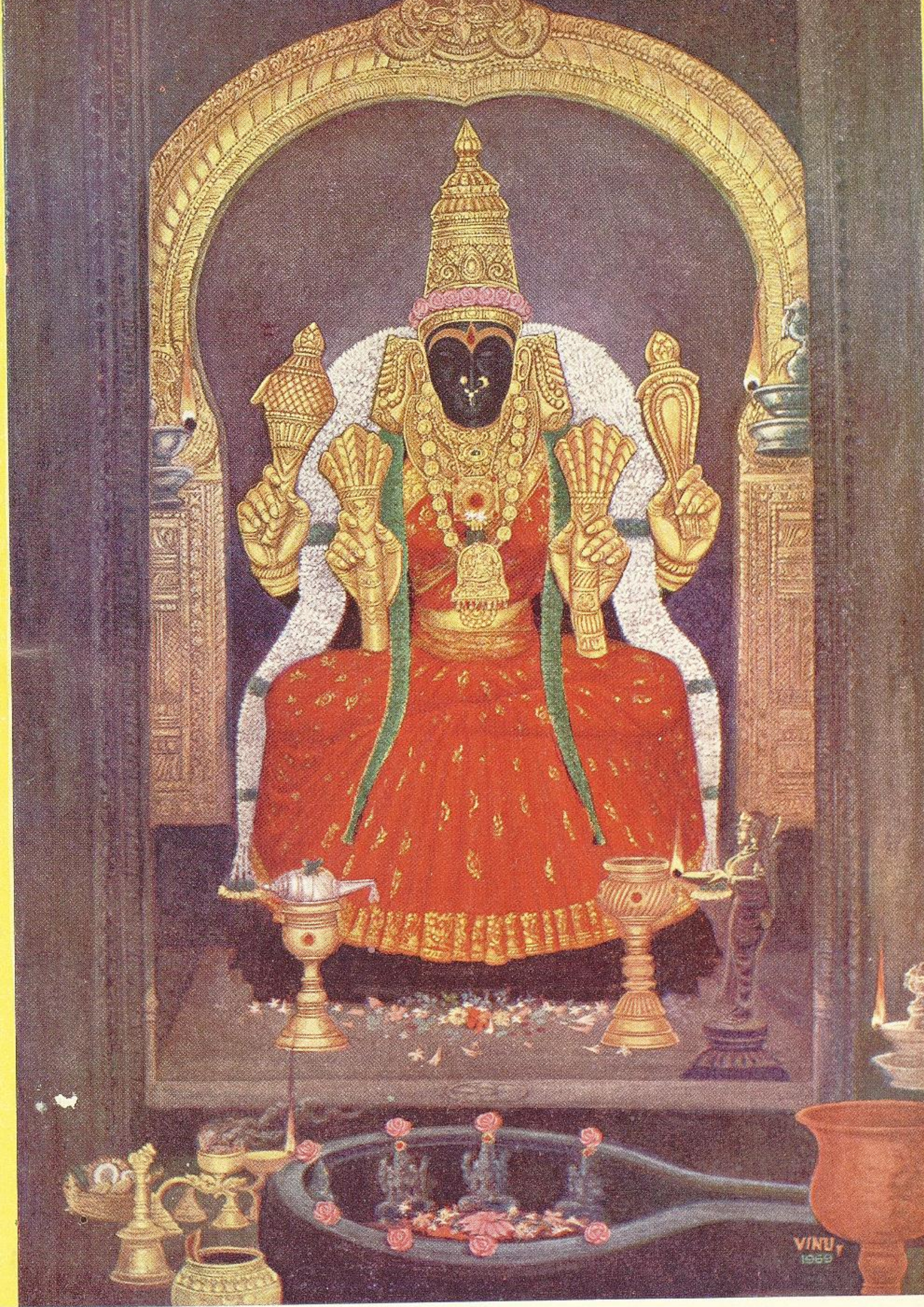
—MOOKA PANCHASATI

Mother Kamakshi ! Thou who hast Brahma (Ka), Vishnu (A) and Siva (Ma) as Thine three eyes (Akshi) and therefore art the Power directing them in their functions of Creation, Preservation and Dissolution ; Thou who residest in the lotus of the heart of all beings ; Thou, Who art the cause of the 'I' feeling of the Absolute, which impelled the actionless Absolute to wish the appearance of the universe ; but Thou Who again, art the very end of wishes and desires (Kamakoti)—do Thou be to me the celestial Cow granting fulfilment of my desire to attain desirelessness by your milk of Enlightenment.

"Wherever my mind goest let there be Thy form ;
Wherever my head bowest let there be Thy feet"

—SANKARA : TRIPURASUNDARI VEDA PADA STAVA

Yatraiva yatraiva mano madeeyam
Tatraiva tatraiva tava svaroopam
Yatraiva yatraiva siro madeeyam
Tatraiva tatraiva pada dvayam te


VINU

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